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The Beaver

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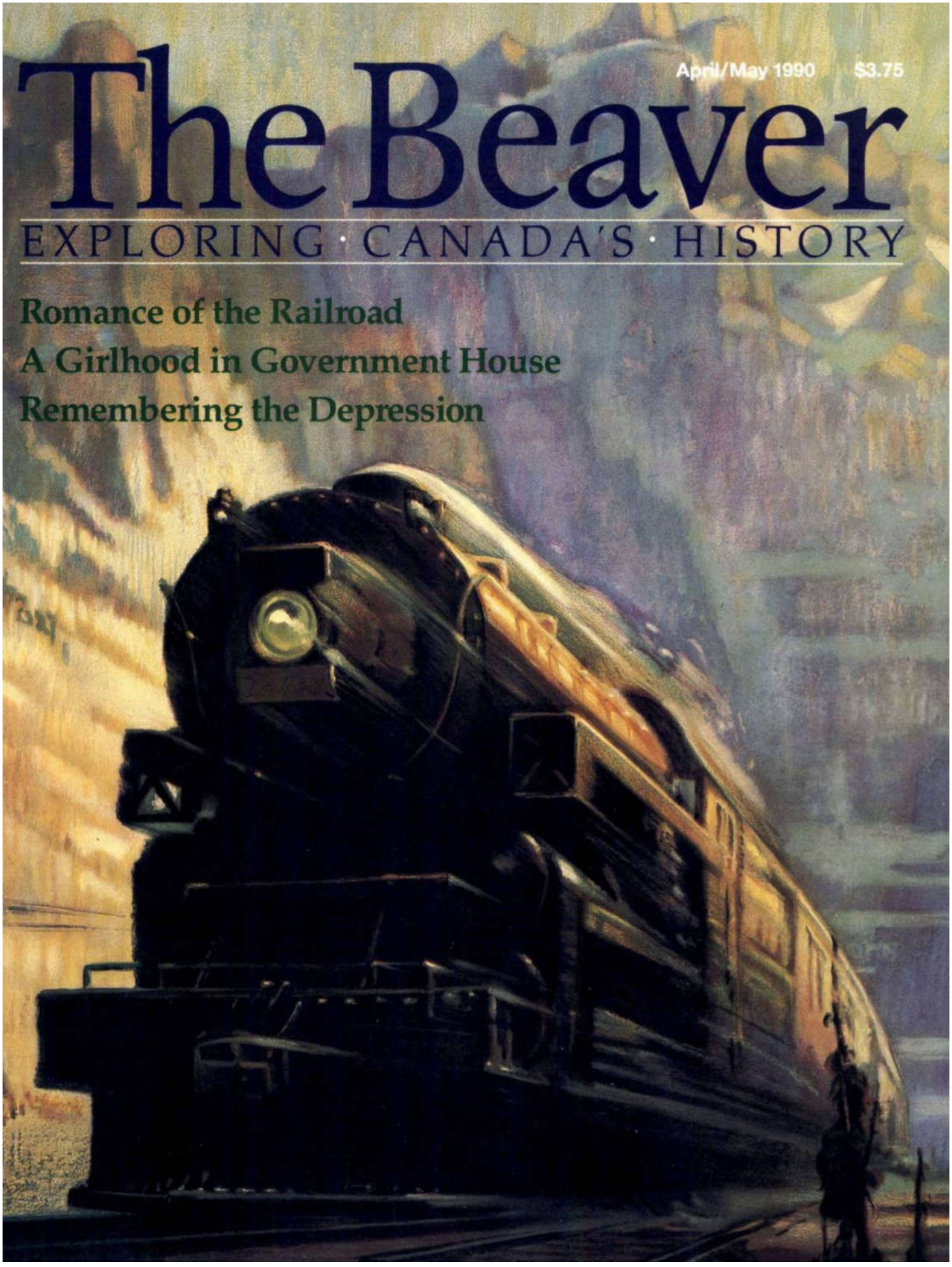
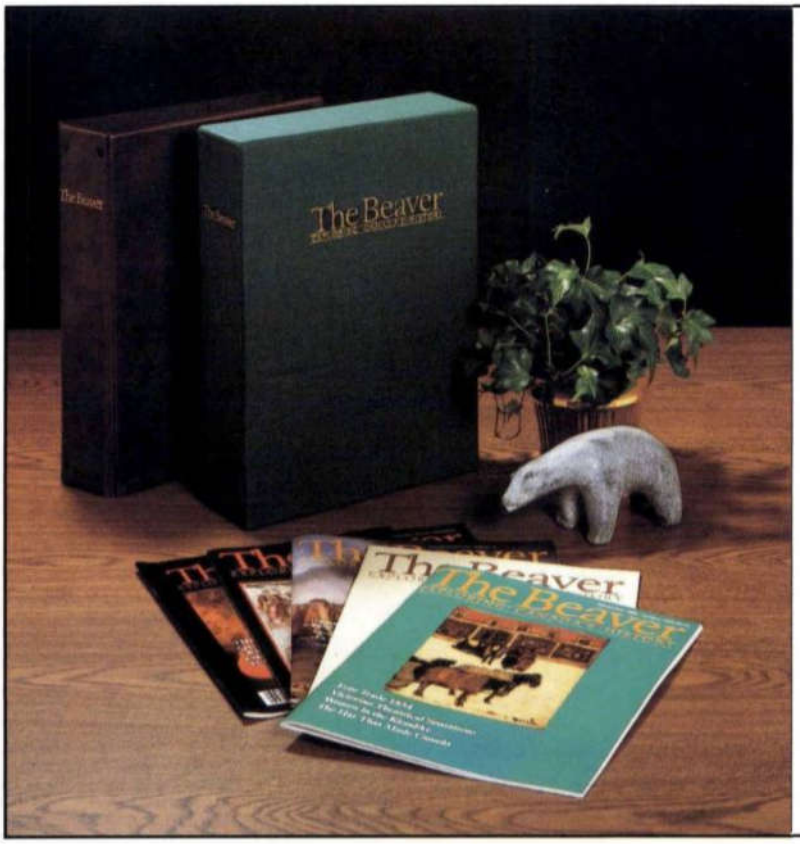
Romance of the Railroad

A Girlhood in Government House

Remembering the Depression





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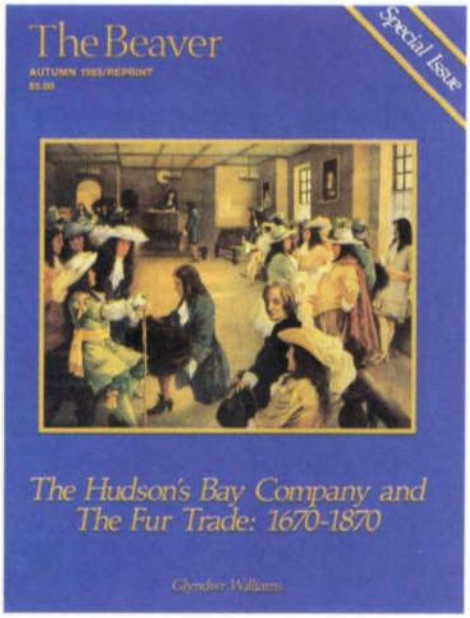

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY AND THE FUR TRADE 1670-1870

By GLYNDWR WILLIAMS

86 pages. Illustrated

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The Beaver

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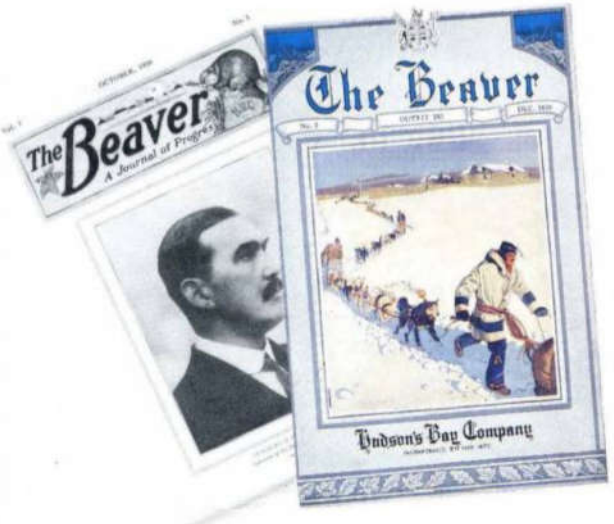


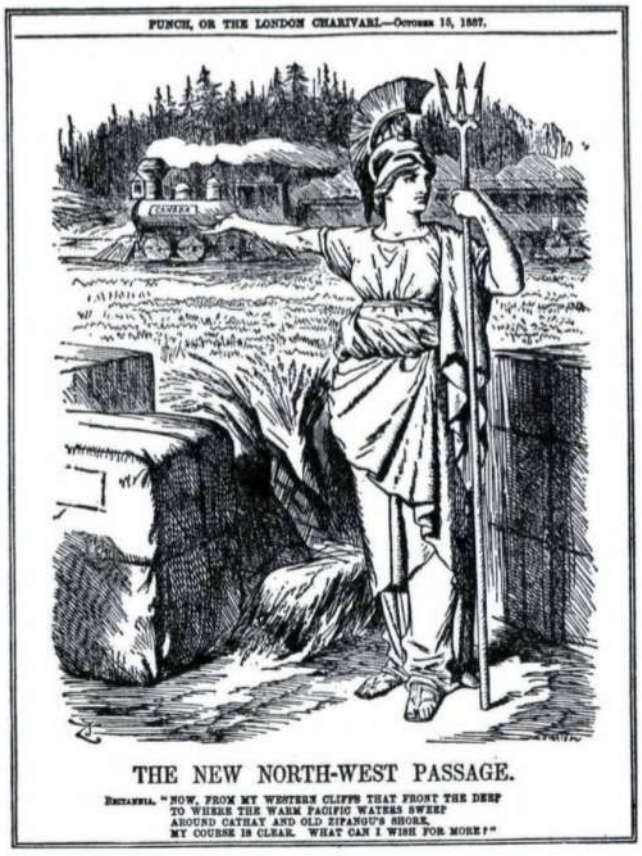
A Part Of Canada's History Since 1920

"The railway found Canada scarcely a geographic expression and made it a nation."

O.D. SKELTON, *Railway builders, 1916*

For over a century the sound of a train whistle echoing over vast distances has been a potent part of the Canadian "dream". For many Canadians the great transcontinental railroad, with its twin ribbons of steel linking East to West, has been a symbol of Canadian unity and nationhood. The "Romance of Canada" — if there is such a thing in this mundane world — is bound up to a great extent with our railways.

The building of the Canadian transcontinental railroad was the first rigorous test of Confederation; a feat of engineering and human effort that inspired nineteenth-century Canadians with the hope that a great nation might well be forged out of difficult and not always suitable materials. If we could overcome vast distances, we might well learn to tame rivers and create an exemplary democracy in northern America.

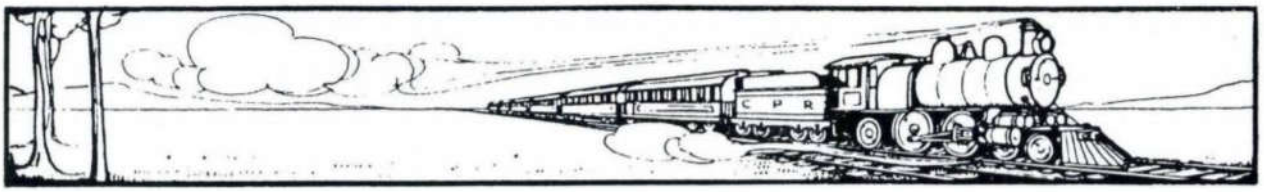

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—October 15, 1887.
THE NEW NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.
Britannia. "NOW, FROM MY WESTERN CLIFFS THAT FRONT THE DEEP
TO WHERE THE WARM PACIFIC WATERS SWEEP
AROUND CATHAY AND OLD ZIPANGU'S SHORE,
MY COURSE IS CLEAR. WHAT CAN I WISH FOR MORE?"

The railroad opened up the country. Immigrants provided the sweat and muscle that laid the rails and blasted a right-of-way through almost impossible terrain. The railroad brought farmers to the prairies and workers to the West Coast. Canadian towns and cities grew and prospered because the railroad ran through them.

The lonely homesteader in his prairie isolation may have stood in his hail-ravaged fields and cursed the CPR, but on a cold winter night with the mercury far below zero the wail of a passing train was a reassuring and comforting sound. There was a growing nation out there in the darkness and the lonely settler in his sod hut was a part of it.

The story of the national railroad is embedded in the Canadian consciousness. On 1 June 1872, as the Pacific Railway Act passed third reading in the Commons, Sir George-Etienne Cartier MP rose in his place and shouted: "All aboard for the West!" Years would pass before the journey could actually be made — there would be blood, sweat, scandal and a triumphant call to "Stand fast, Craigellachie!" before the last spike was driven — but what Cartier called into being with his shout in the old House of Commons in 1872 was the enduring dream of Canadian nationhood, the vision of a vast country stretching from sea to sea, the great Dominion of the North.

Cartier's battle cry of 1872 retains some of its power today, as we have seen in the wave of protest that greeted the drastic reduction in rail passenger service imposed by the federal government in early 1990. Thousands of Canadians — many of whom may not have travelled 10 miles on a railroad — felt that something important had been taken from them, that an essential element of Canadian nationhood was being



cast aside. Passenger rail service had been allowed to decay and decline by successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, who seem to have shared a common inability to see farther than the tips of their pencils.

Canadians of an older generation who have had the great experience of travelling from Atlantic to Pacific by rail have a feeling for the vast scale and scope of this country that will now be tragically unavailable to the rising generation.

To fly over our country in a few hours is to know the interior of an airplane. To travel at ground level by rail is to experience, close up, the diversity, magnificence and beauty of this richly endowed land. It has been suggested that if the entire federal cabinet had taken that last trip across Canada on the "Canadian" the decision to cut transcontinental rail service to the bone might well have been abandoned. The shades of Cartier, Macdonald, Van Horne, Strathcona and Mount Stephen might have taken the journey with them and as the train slowed for one of the spectacular curves deep in the mountains Mr. Mulroney and his colleagues might have caught a fleeting glimpse of some of the thousands of Chinese workers who came half way around the world to help create a Canadian miracle. The dream may have been rekindled.

The politicians remained in Ottawa and the last "Canadian" — an obsolete engine pulling a string of superannuated passenger cars from the 1940s and 1950s — vanished around the bend for the last time. But the faint, lonely wail of its whistle lingers in the air and in the hearts of Canadians who remember the national dream and hope for a time when the trains may come again. Stand fast, Craigellachie! ♦

Roughing it in the Colonies

AN ENGLISHMAN ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

By Richard and Alexander Mackie

Popular and academic historians have dwelt at length on the romance and engineering triumphs of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which at its completion in 1886 linked the West Coast province of British Columbia to the rest of the country. Most Canadians are familiar with the photographs of Donald Smith driving the last spike at Craigellachie in November 1885 and of the throng of well-wishers welcoming the first transcontinental train to Port Moody in July 1886. Less is known of the identity and subsequent careers of the passengers on those first transcontinental trains, and of their reasons for coming west.

Englishmen Horace Smith and James Curtis were just two of those who disembarked from that first train to reach tidewater at Port Moody in 1886. Horace was the grandson of a prosperous cheese merchant in Derbyshire, and had attended Oxford University; James was the son of a retired Royal Navy officer and had studied engineering at the University of London for a year, after toying with a naval career.

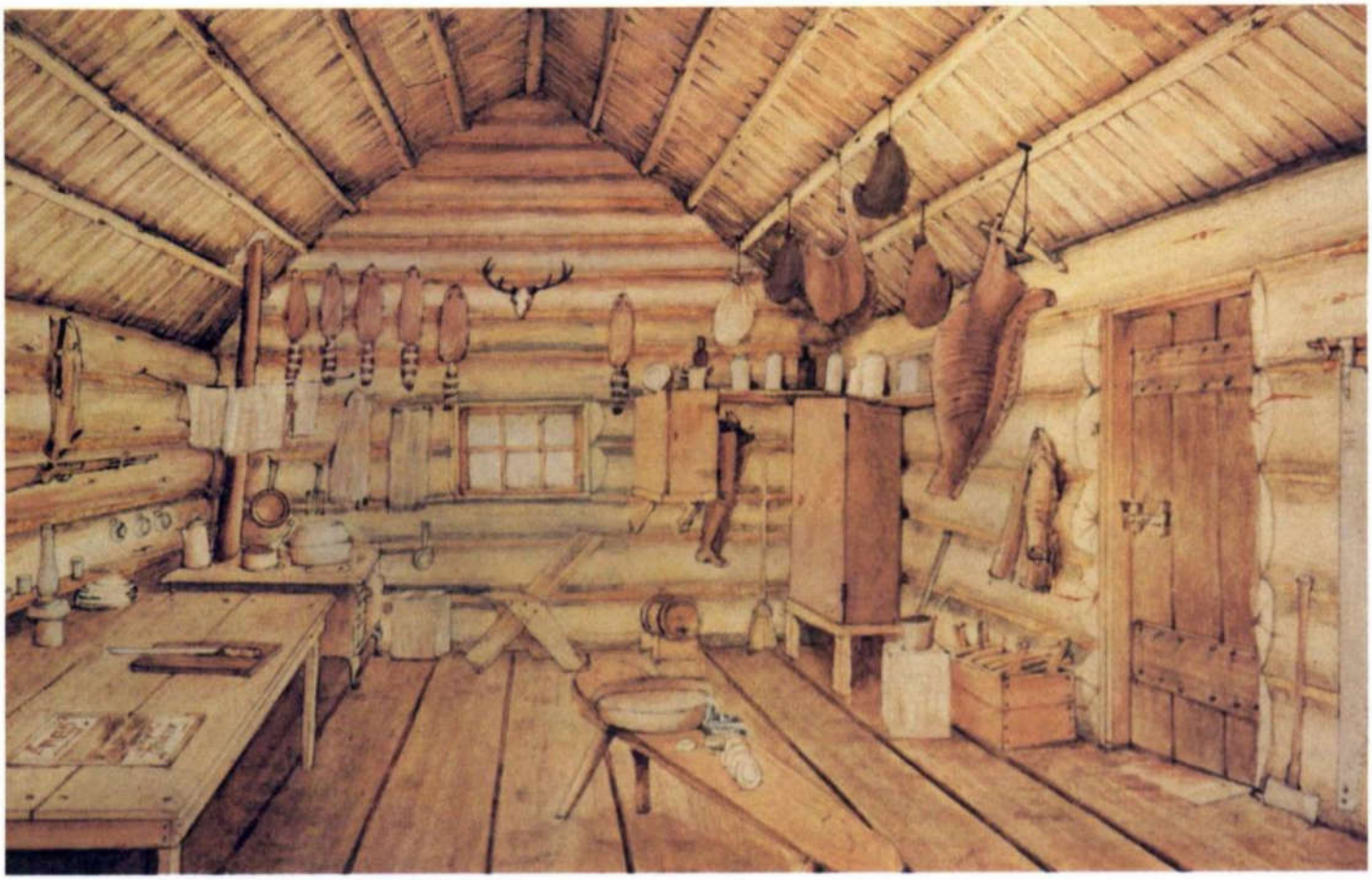
The two decided to emigrate to Canada for a rather unusual reason. James's father, Captain J.D. Curtis, had been deeply impressed by a series of letters written to the English sporting and outdoor magazine *The Field* by an Anglican clergyman, Reverend Jules Xavier Willemar. A native of France who had lived in the Comox Valley since 1871, Willemar praised the valley's agricultural potential and considered it an ideal destination for English settlers. There is evidence that Captain Curtis was not pleased with the progress of his son's career. He once reminded him that "A rolling stone gathers no moss," to which James replied, "No, but it takes a good shine!"

After reading Reverend Willemar's letters, Captain Curtis decided that the Comox Valley sounded just the place for James. He therefore wrote to the magazine in search of someone who might accompany his son to Canada. Captain Curtis's letter was answered by Horace Smith's father — Horace Smith, Senior — who volunteered his son for the journey.

James Curtis and Horace Smith, Junior, bachelor immigrants, crossed the Atlantic by steamer and arrived at Port Moody by train just weeks after the nearby city of Vancouver had burned to the ground. After a quick look at Vancouver, which in its desolate condition did not impress them, they crossed to Vancouver Island. For a time James lived with fellow English immigrant Walter Gage and helped him build his cabin on Kye Bay a few miles north of Comox. He then pre-empted land of his own at nearby Bates Beach where, with the help of Walter Gage and his neighbour Jack Hawkins, also an Englishman, he built a cabin for himself next to a ravine and on the edge of the dense coast forest. For a few years James did little but hunt and fish, though he did help survey part of Comox in 1888.

Both Horace and James must have sent glowing reports back to England, because they were soon joined by other members of their large and capable middle class families. Horace was joined by his brothers Cecil, Eustace, and Neville; Cecil, later known as Cougar Smith, became one of Vancouver Island's best-known cougar hunters; Eustace became the pre-eminent timber cruiser in coastal British Columbia; Neville became a successful Vancouver lawyer. Horace himself later opened a series of sawmills on Vancouver Island. The four Smith brothers were joined by their father Horace, Senior, who, to distinguish him from the other Comox settlers named Smith, earned the nickname "Dude Smith" for his habit of wearing fine clothes while working outdoors. The elder Smith took up land

Courtesy James D. Curtis



The interior of James Curtis's cabin at Bates Beach, circa 1890, painted by George Curtis.

at Black Creek, along the road between Comox and Campbell River.

In 1889 Captain Curtis, a widower, decided to check up on his son in Canada, and he persuaded another son, George, to take a year's holiday from his promising architectural studies in the English seaport town of King's Lynn, Norfolk. Twenty-one-year-old George accepted his father's offer of a year in Canada, although it meant turning down an appealing full-time job as an architect.

On their arrival on Vancouver Island Captain Curtis and George visited James at his Bates Beach cabin. A watercolour painted by George in about 1890 shows what they found. James Curtis is standing outside his simple log cabin with his friend Walter Gage. The forest looms behind them. Notice the hand-split cedar shakes on the roof, the broad-axe, used for squaring or surfacing logs and timbers, leaning next to the cabin, and the handmade broom standing next to the door. Propped or hanging beside the door is a metal pan; is it a frying pan, a wash pan, or possibly a gold pan? The two figures seem prepared to hew something from the log which has been dragged to the front of the cabin.

This plain exterior view presents a stark contrast with the rich detail of the interior, which must have delighted this young architect's eye. The floor-boards are impressively wide and even, and the spaces between the logs have been filled with caulking. On the table is a copy of *The Field* magazine — possibly the very edition containing Reverend Willemar's alluring article — as well as a cutting board, a knife, an oil lamp, and what may be a tureen. On the shelf above the table is an ink pot and pen and several small jars. On the wall above the table is a rifle, a mysterious article of clothing, and three cups or mugs. In the corner is a woodstove upon which are several pots and pans; on the far wall is a deer skull with antlers (probably a hunting trophy), as well as a frying pan, a toasting rack, and several towels left to dry.

Hanging on the wall above the stove are several raccoon pelts. A hand-made chair sits beneath the window and to the right of the window is a small cupboard, on top of which is a tea or coffee pot and a shelf holding several jars which may have contained basic foodstuffs. Hanging next to the cupboard is a pair of hipwaders and leaning next to them is a store-bought broom. On the floor is a keg, probably containing

Courtesy James D. Curtis

Above: Walter Gage and George Curtis outside the cabin at Bates Beach, circa 1890.
Below: Roughing it in the bush, circa 1890.

molasses: James' sparse early diaries reveal that he favoured pancakes with molasses. In the corner of the room is a large storage cupboard, leaning next to which may be a fishing rod. Beside the door is a jacket, a box of stove wood, and what looks like a drinking pot; hanging from a gambrel next to the solidly made door is half of an animal carcass, probably a deer. Also hanging from the ceiling are a cloth bag and what may be several haunches of meat, possibly ham. To the right of the door is a double-bitted axe and a two-man crosscut saw with only one handle attached, which indicates that it had most recently been used for cutting up rather than falling. In the centre of the room is a basin of water, a cloth, and a row of saucers left to dry.

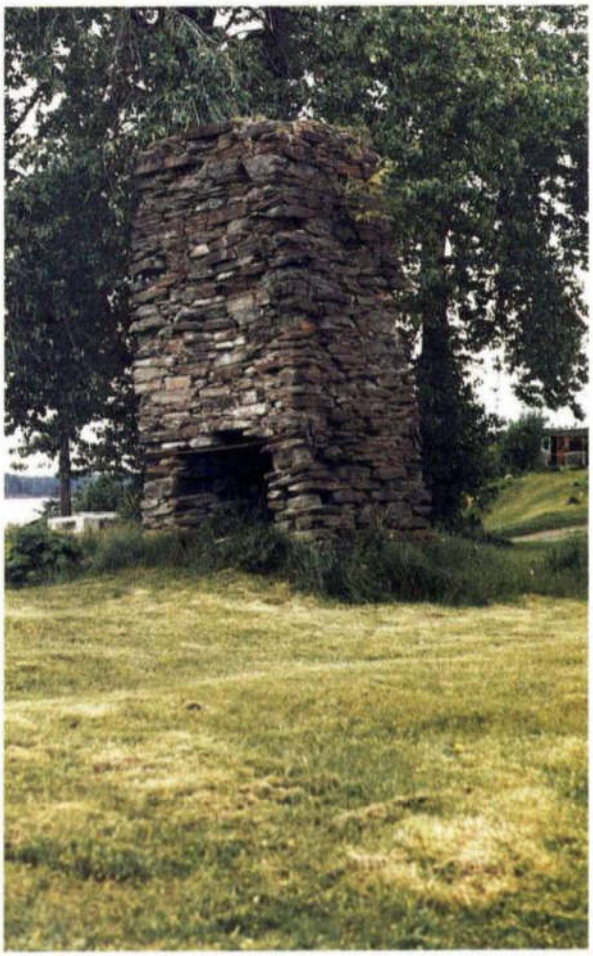
Hunting is a dominant motif in the painting. Both James and George were keen sportsmen; a relation of theirs owned or leased a farm on the Prince of Wales's Sandringham Estate in England where George had gone shooting on weekends while studying architecture. British Columbia, with its abundant wildlife and absence of restrictive game laws, must have held great appeal to these immigrants and offered opportunities for hunting not available at home. Such an idyllic way of life could not, however, be sustained without regular incomes, and in the mid 1890s James took up farming before serving in the Boer War. Later, he served on the front lines in France during World War I; before his death in 1942 he earned the reputation as one of the Comox Valley's finest poachers.

George, meanwhile, found work with the Victoria-based surveyor James Herrick McGregor, author of the eccentric book of poems *The Wisdom of Waloopi*. Trained as an architect, George was never a professional surveyor; his son recalls that his 1890s work was "purely a bread and butter stopgap" and that he was employed as an axeman or chainman rather than as chief of McGregor's survey parties.

A photograph survives of the members of one survey outfit at their winter camp (see page 12). George Curtis is seated at the right next to the tree. Notice the stiff collars, ties, cravats, and "please don't rain" caps worn by these outdoorsmen.

George's surveys took him to such places as Port Simpson, Cumberland, Port Alice, Great Central Lake, Alert Bay, and Fort Rupert, where he did careful sketches and watercolour paintings. In about 1896 George Curtis and his boss McGregor bought a fourteen-acre lot on the Willemar Bluffs, Comox, where the two men subsequently built adjacent summer cottages designed by George Curtis.

George's surveying transpired to be only a prelude to a distinguished career as an architect in Nelson, Vancouver, and Victoria. In the mid or late 1890s he left the coast for the mining district of the Kootenays, where he formed a partnership with a Scot named John James Honeyman. Cambridge-educated Honeyman



The chimney at Fort Rupert photographed by Richard Mackie in June 1988. It is the only remnant of the once extensive HBC coal mining post on Vancouver Island.

opened an office in Rossland, while Curtis had his office in Nelson, where he designed, among other structures, both the Anglican Pro Cathedral and the Roman Catholic church. In December 1900 he married Agnes Crickmay, who with her sister operated Nelson's first hospital. In 1903 Honeyman and Curtis shifted their operations to Vancouver where they designed houses for Richard Marpole, Lord Shaughnessy, and other Canadian Pacific Railway Company officials.

In 1907 George Curtis was asked to complete the main block of Victoria's Empress Hotel following a dispute between the CPR and architect F.M. Rattenbury. According to Curtis's daughter, in 1910 George Curtis was recalled once again to design a reading room (now the Bengal Room), a conservatory, and to landscape the grounds, which included tennis courts and rose gardens.

A later photograph shows George Curtis, the successful architect, and his aged father Captain Curtis

Courtesy James D. Curtis

Fort Rupert circa 1895 by George Curtis. The inscription reads: "Hudson Bay Co. Buildings Fort Rupert, VI. R. Hunt factor & two daughters and dog half timber wolf."

playing bowls in their garden in North Vancouver in about 1910. George remained active until about 1930, when he retired from his architectural practice. A photograph survives of George in his retirement enjoying a cigarette in his garden on the Willemar Bluffs overlooking the Strait of Georgia. He died in 1940, leaving behind those careful watercolours as testimony to his first years as a settler and a sportsman on the West Coast of Canada.

Of great historical interest are George Curtis's paintings of Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island, which he produced in the 1930s from earlier sketches and photographs.

Not to be confused with Rupert House on James Bay, or with Prince Rupert on the north coast of British Columbia, Fort Rupert was built in 1849 on Sir George Simpson's orders as a coal-mining post as part of the Hudson's Bay Company's policy of economic diversification on the West Coast.

Despite the coal miners' best efforts, the Fort Rupert coal proved to be of poor quality, with the result that the Company transferred its coal-mining equipment and colliers to its new post at Nanaimo in 1852. Fort Rupert was maintained by the Hudson's Bay Company for another thirty years; an early photograph shows the post as it appeared in the 1860s, the fort buildings largely obscured by the imposing stockade. Gradually, during the late nineteenth century, the post's importance diminished as the fur trade declined and as Indians took up work in the industries introduced by the European settlers.

During the early years two of Fort Rupert's most noteworthy figures were Robert and Mary Hunt. Born in about 1827 in Dorset, England, Robert Hunt joined the Hudson's Bay Company as a labourer in 1849 and arrived at Fort Victoria on the immigrant ship *Norman Morison* in the following year. He was sent to Fort Rupert prior to the Fraser River gold rush of 1858.

Courtesy James D. Curtis

Another view of Fort Rupert, circa 1895.

Here, he married Mary Ebbetts or Ansnaq (1823-1919) a Tongas Indian and a granddaughter of Chief Shaiks, who was on her way from the north coast to Fort Victoria with her family when she stopped at Fort Rupert and met Robert Hunt.

By 1857, Robert Hunt had been promoted to the position of Indian trader, and he and Mary brought up a family of eleven children at Fort Rupert and at Fort Simpson further up the coast. At the age of fifty-four, in 1881, Robert Hunt was the Hudson's Bay Company's postmaster at Fort Rupert, but in the following year the Company finally gave up its land there after a thirty-two year tenure. The Company allowed Hunt to occupy, free of rent, the fort buildings "on condition of making the necessary repairs at his own cost, and taking care of the premises for the Company". In 1883 Hunt retired from the Hudson's Bay Company; in 1885 he bought for $1,500 the trading post and five acres of land around it, and in the years that followed he and his family maintained a general store and lived in the Company's old buildings. In May 1889 the historic "Big House" (the officers' quarters) and three other original fort buildings were destroyed by fire.

One of George Curtis's paintings shows what was left of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Rupert which he visited in the 1890s on his return from surveying work on the outer coast of Vancouver Island. The stockades had long since disintegrated, leaving the fort buildings exposed and picturesque. In the background is the Coast Range of mainland British Columbia, separated from Vancouver Island by Queen Charlotte Strait and by Deer and Peel Islands in the middle distance. Even in the 1890s these buildings were remarkable survivors of the fur trade era on the West Coast; the only other Hudson's Bay Company structures in that area to survive into the twentieth century were the store building at Fort Langley and the bastion at Nanaimo.

The buildings themselves, erected in 1849 or 1850, are of considerable architectural and historical interest. Clearly visible is the Hudson's Bay Company's distinctive post-and-sill or *pièce sur pièce* style of timber frame house construction that originated in

Courtesy James D. Curtis

George Curtis and Walter Gage on a survey party, 1890s.

Courtesy James D. Curtis

"The Look-out" at Fort Rupert, photographed in the 1920s by George Curtis's son James.

northwestern France in the Middle Ages, flourished along the lower St. Lawrence River in the seventeenth century, and reached the shores of the Pacific two centuries later. The roofs of these houses are supported by corner posts and, in the house on the right, by additional posts situated at intervals along the walls. These sturdy walls consist of lengths of squared timber slotted into the upright posts. The dormer windows are probably later additions. The house on the left is the factor's house which was unaffected by the fire of May 1889.

Although by the late eighteenth century timber frame buildings of this design were rarely built along the St. Lawrence, the Hudson's Bay Company's French Canadian builders continued to construct such houses in the Company's extensive and heavily-timbered Western territories. These houses, then, are a fragment of a world much older than their date of construction and remind us of the eastern origins of the West Coast fur trade.

Fort Rupert must have presented a welcome relief to George Curtis's architectural sensibilities after his crossing by foot from the wild west coast of Vancouver Island. His paintings suggest a fascination with this peaceful remnant of the transcontinental fur trading company.

Seated in front of the houses is Robert Hunt, patriarch of the Hunt family and ancestor of many celebrated artists and carvers. Two of his seven daughters are with him and the dog at his feet is half timber wolf. Mary and Robert Hunt also had four sons, one of whom was George, well-known then and now as Dr. Franz Boas' able helper and an ethnologist in his own right.

Next to the Hunts is a hand-winch of a type appropriate for drawing water from a well; no well, however, is visible in the painting, which may mean that the winch was undergoing repair. On the ground are cedar planks, several rounds of wood, barrels, and what may be a mast or a spar pole.

George Curtis's second painting of Fort Rupert is also of considerable interest. The buildings of the old fort line the hill in the background, and part of the Kwakiutl village of Fort Rupert dominates the foreground. In front of the houses are four poles upon which are carved traditional figures as well as figures in European dress. These slim totem poles resemble ship spars or masts, which were in fact manufactured at Fort Rupert in the 1850s.

Courtesy James D. Curtis

George Curtis in retirement at Comox, 1930s.

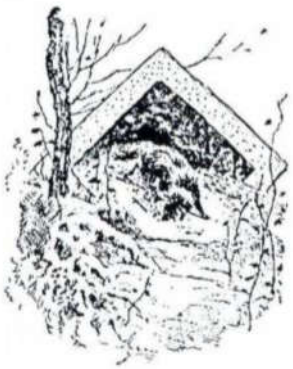
The Kwakiutl houses, like the mixed-blood Hunt family, show a considerable blending of cultures: the doors and windows are derived from European designs, and some of the buildings seem to mimic the upright corner posts and single-gable roofs of the fort structures. Ladders, probably to guard against roof fires, lead up the house sides and roofs. The front of one house is propped up by two poles to prevent its collapse or to bolster it against the wind; between the houses and the beach is an elevated path consisting of crushed sea-shells. Canoe paddles and furled sails lean against the two houses to the right.

Several sets of European-style steps connect the path to the beach, where three canoes have been pulled up. A man, paddle in hand, is walking up the beach toward the houses, while another appears to be unloading salmon from a canoe onto a broad cedar plank. Six logs, four of which are cut to length, have been pulled up against the canoe in the right-hand corner of the painting. These are probably cedar logs intended for construction purposes rather than for firewood; they might be destined to be split into planks for house walls or used as house posts. Clamshells and starfish litter the beach, and a busy flock of scavenging crows is at work.

These two watercolours may be the only detailed depictions of the Hudson's Bay Company buildings at this site: shortly after Curtis's visit the remaining houses at Fort Rupert burned to the ground. Today, only the lone chimney from the factor's house, on the point of collapse, remains of the Hudson's Bay Company's once-extensive Fort Rupert establishment. ♦

Courtesy James D. Curtis

"The Guardian Angel" at Fort Rupert, photographed by James Curtis in the 1920s.



Richard Mackie is a doctoral candidate in the history department at the University of British Columbia and the author of "Hamilton Mack Laing: Hunter-Naturalist" (Sono Nis Press, 1986). Alexander Mackie is an archaeologist with the City of London Museum, London, England. *They wish to thank James and Elizabeth Curtis for their assistance with this article.*

A Girlhood In Government House

By Elizabeth Aikins Ney
as told to Adele Rose Wickett

When a man of 65 takes office as Lieutenant-Governor, the re-arranging of Government House does not normally include preparing it for children.

Things were different in Winnipeg in 1916. Sir James Aikins was bringing my sister Helen, age 14, and me, age 13, to share the spacious, but not numerous, rooms of Manitoba's vice-regal mansion. We trailed around after our parents and the Deputy Minister of Public Works on an inspection tour of the house. Changes in decor were suggested by Father and Mother, and noted by the Deputy Minister. I proposed to get rid of the huge ugly oriental vases a predecessor had left in the drawing room, but this idea was vetoed.

Mother took some care to help Helen and me choose the right wallpaper for our rooms. The Deputy Minister, anxious to get on with the job, found this tiresome.

"We've never had children at Government House before!" he complained. I was appalled! Helen and I did not consider ourselves children, and if the man had any sense, he would know that 13 and 14 are Quite Grown Up!

In spite of such a demanding beginning, we soon moved into our freshly-wallpapered rooms, and into a delightful new lifestyle. That year a film was made of the opening of the Manitoba legislature and Helen and I made our debut into public life as gracefully as we could, walking up the steps between stiff rows of teen-age cadets. There was a 21-gun salute, and a lengthy ceremony; but what I remember most clearly was watching as one of the cadets fainted.

Government House itself held great fascination. I loved to prowl about its rooms with my best friend, Joan. There was a conservatory on the ground floor, complete with Mr. Hawkes, the indoor gardener. Between the conservatory and the formal dining room was the palm room, a tropical indoor garden where our family ate private meals. Father always read the Bible to us there before breakfast. The kitchen was in the basement, and food was sent up on a lift. There were three drawing rooms in a row, and a ballroom. Father began the habit of pacing the length of these drawing rooms on Sundays, singing hymns with us while Mother or Helen played the piano. He was never enthusiastic about dancing, though, and later had the ballroom converted into a garage.

At the top of the curving, open staircase Helen and I had our suite of rooms. Once when my friend Joan stayed overnight a stray pillow from a pillow-fight flew down this staircase, nearly landing on the table at a

Photo by H.J. Metcalfe

Government House, Winnipeg, circa 1910.

state banquet. From our bedroom window we could observe the lingering farewells at the side door when the Scottish cook said goodnight to her beau. Everyone used the side door except Father and Mother. Even my sister and I were careful not to come in the big double front doors except when accompanied by our parents, as, for example, when we all came home from church together.

Mother's bedroom, also on the second floor, was the largest, so she always moved out so that visiting VIPs could be accommodated there. When the Prince of Wales was expected, a shower was installed in this room's ensuite bathroom. Father slept in his study in a tower room on the third floor. Farther up this tower a trap door led to a little attic. From there the flag was flown when he was in residence. The servants' quarters were also on the third floor, for all except the outdoor gardener (who had his own cottage) and Mah Bin Joe, the butler (who lived in Chinatown).

Across the road from Government House, the gardener's cottage faced the Assiniboine River. Most of the other outdoor workers were "trusties", prisoners considered reliable enough to labour outside the jail walls. We girls were never forbidden to talk to the trusties, and found it intriguing at times to do so. Once, during the Prince of Wales's visit, a trustie asked me to get an autograph in his book. I took the book, but, to my disappointment, never managed to get the signature. At the garden party that day, the popular prince had shaken so many hands that his right hand became sore and bruised. He switched to the left hand until it also began to ache. When the guests all finally left, I could not bring myself to present the autograph book to the exhausted prince.

The staff who resided on the third floor included the Russian chauffeur and his rosy-cheeked sister who cleaned up in the kitchen. Various cooks and assistants came and went; but the servant who left the biggest impression was Mah Bin Joe. The Lieutenant-Governor was heard to remark that he would resign his office if Joe ever quit. Coming to Government House when he was 17, Joe cultivated a great skill in piling

Elizabeth, Harold, Lady Aikins and Helen gathering lilacs on the lawn.

dirty dishes all along his arm when clearing the table at formal dinners. He then made a grand exit, kicking open the swinging door to the butler's pantry. At receptions and levees, Joe became indispensable. He learned to make excellent meringues, salad dressings, fruit salads, and non-alcoholic punches. The punches especially required some creativity, for Father, the drafter of the Manitoba Temperance Act, never allowed alcoholic beverages to be served in Government House. (He did have to relax this a little when the Prince of Wales arrived with a large party, and his own supply of liquor.) On his salary of $90.00 a month, Mah Bin Joe managed to invest in a grocery store and the Aberdeen Cafe, as well as to buy himself a car.

When guests came to call, Mah Bin Joe had them sign a register. The custom was to hold a reception on New Year's Day, inviting all the visitors who had signed the book during the year, among others. Mother, her lady friends, and all their daughters would help to welcome the guests at Government House. The military were always received first. Helen and I were assigned to such duties as hostessing at the refreshment table. For Helen, this was a delight. She loved the formal occasions, the receptions and the protocol. I would rather have been playing with the boys or running races at school.

Yet we took naturally to our formal duties, as we should have, being possessed of long, deep roots into the groundsoil of Canada's early leadership. Our father's father, James Cox Aikins, and our mother's uncle, Charles Carrol Colby, had helped bend the course of Canadian history by voting with Sir John A. Macdonald on the issue of Confederation. Without their support, the motion might have been defeated. James Cox Aikins went on to become a senator, and later the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba. Charles Carrol Colby became Speaker of the House of Commons, President of the Privy Council, and later wrote a book called *Parliamentary Government in Canada.*

The Aikins family lore included stories like the one about Aunt Clara, Father's sister, who had lived in Manitoba's Government House from 1882 to 1888 as the youngest of the seven children of James Cox Aikins. One cold winter day Clara was sitting on the marble slab over an upstairs radiator, and whistling. Her father was conducting a conference downstairs, and sent a servant up with this message: "Whistling girls and crowing hens always come to some bad ends." Clara sent the servant back to say, "Whistling girls and jumping sheep are the best things that men can keep", and continued to sit on the radiator and whistle.

Aunt Clara was once again a figure at Government House. Now in her 50s, she gave little hint of that early devil-may-care attitude, but certainly retained her right to her own opinions. She had helped her father entertain when he was vice-regent, and now applied all her skills in protocol and household management to ease our mother, Lady Aikins, into the chatelaine role. Clara's immensely high standards made her less than popular with the servants. At one formal dinner, I was horrified when Aunt Clara, across the table, accidentally knocked over her glass of punch. It was a moment of exquisite humiliation for the chief arbiter of etiquette.

Our glamorous role as children of Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor contrasted sharply with our rather ordinary school life. When Helen was 16, she was sent to boarding school in Toronto, partly because the two of us bickered so much that our parents thought it wise to separate us. The result was that I became so lonely and depressed without Helen that I was sent to join her in Toronto 6 months later. We both spent the next year at St. Margaret's School (Helen distinguishing herself by becoming a prefect), before returning to enroll in Kelvin High School in Winnipeg.

I worked hard at being an "ordinary" person in high school, sharing all the fun, and competing well in high jump and relay events. Unfortunately, I also did my share of disrupting classes. Latin was a particular trial to me, and I often had to be kept in after school to correct mistakes.

Sir James Aikins' Winnipeg: Portage Avenue looking toward the Portage and Main intersection.

In summer, we girls could invite our friends to play lawn tennis at Government House, or take them on excursions to the Aikins cottage at Minaki, Ontario, or to the family's farm near Elkhorn, Manitoba. Father had acquired the farm when he needed to be a landowner in order to represent Brandon in the Dominion Parliament in 1911. He installed 2,000 sheep, a shepherd, and a few horses for riding, but never became a very successful farmer. Helen was a serious pianist, and spent many hours practising on the grand piano at home, but I preferred to be outdoors, wearing overalls and chewing gum.

The cottage at Minaki was my favourite place to chew gum in overalls. Father bought the beautiful spot for me, and for Harold, my stepbrother, older than I by thirteen years. Harold, with his wife Myrtle, fixed up a room over the boathouse for my friends and me. Below us, the speedy launch, *Sunbeam*, rocked gently as we dreamed. By day, Harold's boatman was kept busy entertaining us. I once had him hang a rope over the stern of *Sunbeam*; we hung on and skimmed at full speed through the water. (It worked fine until one day one of the girls accidentally let go of the rope. The boatman backed up the boat, and its propellor cut off my poor friend's toe.)

In winter, the greatest fun was skating with friends in a fenced-off ice rink on the river, close to Government House. For 10¢ we could skate as long as we wished, and for me that usually meant being late for supper. My father would be waiting for me, anxious and annoyed, but he always melted with relief when I bounced in, hanging my skates in the hall by the pantry.

Sir James did not approve of his daughters going out alone with young men, so I asked him if he would give a ball for me, to which I could invite friends my own age, including boys. Having already turned the ballroom into a garage, Father could not have been too enthusiastic about this proposal, but indulgently agreed to remove the cars and host a ball. At breakfast for several weeks before the event we went over the guest list as carefully as if it were for a state occasion. "And what does *his* father do?" Father would ask, with a twinkle in his eye.

The ball was an evening of dreams. Mah Bin Joe conjured his fanciest buffet ever. The guests waltzed and foxtrotted to the Princess Patricia's military band, on a floor diligently scrubbed of the grease and grit from the evacuated cars. Father was known for doing everything well, and his reputation did not suffer from this event.

Although our patriarch never took a holiday in the 10 years that he served as Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, (except for short trips to the farm), there were excursions for mother and Helen and me. We loved travelling by train, and did a great deal of it. Father

Governor-General Lord Byng (right) standing beside Sir James Aikins and entourage. Government House, Winnipeg, June 1922.

had been the western solicitor for the CPR, and had the use of a pass, and sometimes even a private car loaned to him by the president of the railway.

Mother took us "children" to Glacier, B.C. in 1916 for the opening of the Connaught Tunnel. Father joined us briefly for the ceremony, quickly returning to his public duties.

We stayed at Glacier House, the CPR's splendid alpine resort hotel. It had originally been built as a meal stop for the trains, so they didn't have to pull the heavy dining cars through the steep grades of the Rocky Mountains. The popularity of the hotel, situated a 45-minute walk from the Illecillewaet Glacier, had grown as the trains deposited load after load of tourists at the doorstep. On this occasion, the guests were witnessing the opening of the 8-kilometre-long tunnel which would not only protect the trains from the worst risks of avalanches, but would remove the necessity of travelling up the long valley loop by the door of Glacier House. The shortcut was the death-knell of the beautiful resort; but for the moment two cheerful teenagers simply enjoyed the exciting opportunity for a celebration.

We walked up to the glacier with Mother and a Swiss guide. I climbed right into an ice-cave in the glacier, and promptly had a nosebleed. Mother and Helen refused to go in.

We were there to see the first train go through the tunnel with the Duke of Connaught, then Canada's Governor-General, on board. Frankly, I was more impressed by the trainmen who walked casually on top of the train. Dangling bells at the tunnel opening warned of danger as the train entered the rocky hole, and the trainmen instantly dropped flat to the roof.

There were many train trips to Toronto, where the old Aikins family residence was presided over by unmarried aunts Clara and Emma. Helen and I called the spacious house on Wellesley Street the "Aunt Hill". Also in Toronto lived Father's brother, Will Aikins, a physician. Uncle Will and Father had quarrelled some years earlier, and visits to that home were sadly rare. Uncle Will and Aunt Gussie had no children of their

own, but they had a wonderful collection of music boxes to delight young visitors. There was a glass box containing a large brass cylinder that played when you turned the crank. There was a chair that chimed when you sat in it; and there was a plate that gave a tune when the last cookie was removed.

One summer, the female members of our family and a collection of relatives were vacationing at Kennebunk Beach, Maine. While we were there, several cases of smallpox frightened the Canadian officials into closing the Canadian border to anyone who had not been vaccinated. Unfortunately, that included the Aikins family. Mother was nervous about local doctors, so she sent for Uncle Will. He had been involved in setting up the innoculation program in Canada, and gladly travelled to Kennebunk to vaccinate the family. This gesture went a long way toward dissolving his quarrel with Father, and smoothed the path for us girls to make more frequent visits to the music box house.

Although the water at Kennebunk Beach was cold, I persuaded "Uncle" John Forster to teach me to swim there when I was 14. "Uncle" John was engaged to Aunt Emma of the "Aunt Hill". Their courtship continued over many years because John's mother had made him promise that he wouldn't marry until she died. He kept that promise while carrying on a successful career as an international portrait artist. He fascinated everyone with his accounts of sittings with the famous and royal, including the Emperor of Japan, who was regarded as a god, and not supposed to be seen by foreigners. When John's mother finally died, he was about 60, and kept his other promise by marrying Aunt Emma.

A major portion of Father's vice-regal job description entailed hospitality, and at that point his duties became his family's duties. The Duke of Connaught did a great deal of touring of Canada during his term as Governor-General. When he stayed in Winnipeg, it was with the Aikins. The duke's daughter, Princess Patricia, often travelled with her father. She was enormously popular, and lent her name to everything from military units to girls' clubs. Helen and I belonged to such a club, and attended a reception where the girls were all dressed in white and reviewed by Princess "Pat".

Part of Princess Pat's mystique (at least for the Aikins sisters) lay in the fact that she was one of the first to "bob" her beautiful dark hair. This was also during the time that "permanent waves" were hitting the women's fashion scene. Under Princess Pat's inspiration, I decided that I would be the first in my circle to get one. However, the perm cost so much that I was afraid to let the hairdresser go ahead and set my hair, suspecting that this final operation would cost even more. I went home looking like Shock-Headed Peter. Mother kindly relieved the situation by quickly giving

Elizabeth Aikins with her hair newly bobbed and permed.

me the money for the necessary styling, before I could be seen in public.

National and international notables came and went at Government House. When I was 13, Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister, offered me his arm and escorted me to dinner. When the Prince of Wales visited, a formal ball was held in his honour. The most eligible bachelor in the British Empire invited me to dance, and then suggested that we stroll in the awning-covered passage that had been set up in the garden. As we walked up and down, the Prince offered me a cigarette. I replied that I was not allowed to smoke, but on second thought asked if I could please take the cigarette as a souvenir. It survived for many years in my "memory book".

When Prince Arthur of Connaught arrived with a very large staff, Government House was too small to house everyone. So Father opened our private mansion, "Riverbend", and put Helen and me in charge of entertaining the overflow there. An old family cook was assigned to help us with the cooking and protocol.

As Lieutenant-Governor, Sir James had four aides-de-camp assigned to him. One of these was George

Sir James in Windsor uniform.

Elizabeth (third from right) and friends, wearing overalls and chewing gum at Minaki.

Manitoba Archives: Foote Collection.

The Prince of Wales, Victoria, 1919.

Princess Pat (with muff) sits beside her father, the Duke of Connaught, Governor-General of Canada from 1911-1916.

Pearkes, who received one of Canada's first Victoria Crosses, later became General Pearkes, and concluded a distinguished career in politics as British Columbia's Lieutenant-Governor. Another was Major Fred Ney, a decorated British veteran who spent most of his time organizing youth clubs, educational exchanges, and tours around the British Empire. He was a charming idealist and visionary. . .and it did not take long for him to capture Helen's heart, even though he was twice her age, 42 years to her 21.

Father was not impressed with Fred as a prospective son-in-law, and did not approve of Helen marrying someone who had not "established himself". Furthermore, Helen was about to make her piano debut at the Royal Albert Hall, London, England, and Father urged her not to lose this opportunity by marrying hastily.

Nevertheless, Helen and Fred called in our uncle, Reverend Walter Cooke, for a private wedding service in the front drawing room at Government House. I was the only attendant. I put on my best dress, and draped an Egyptian prayer rug over a car cushion to make a kneeling pad for the ceremony. Mother and Harold were there, but Father was upstairs in his study and refused to come down. It took all the best efforts of Harold and Uncle Walter to induce him to attend his daughter's wedding. He stood behind everyone else, radiating disapproval.

Helen and Fred went to Paris for their honeymoon, returning later to Winnipeg with Fred's younger brother, R.O. "Roney" Ney. They had unexpectedly run into him in a Paris art gallery as he was enjoying a vacation from his farm in Kenya. Fred's invitation to visit Canada was accepted on the spot.

So it was that I met my brother-in-law and future husband. As a company commander at the age of 17, Roney had been wounded in World War I. When it was over, the British government had offered him a choice of land in Canada or in Kenya. Kenya seemed the appropriate place, as Roney felt that his residual disabilities demanded lots of inexpensive farm labour. He enjoyed the expatriate lifestyle, and enchanted me with stories of his prize-winning horse, the safaris, and the goings-on at the Muthaiga Club in Nairobi (where Karen Blixen of *Out of Africa* fame was also a member).

Roney and I became seriously interested in each other at Christmastime in 1924. Roney went back to Kenya and we corresponded for the next year. When he returned for Christmas in 1925, Roney asked me to marry him, and I sent him to Father.

"Young man, what are your assets?" asked Sir James. Apparently the answer was not satisfactory, and the marriage was opposed, so Roney again returned single to Kenya.

One of the obstacles to me getting married and moving to Africa was my chronic appendicitis. Mother would not hear of me moving so far away with such a condition. Father had sent me to various doctors, but was strongly opposed to surgery. I had had attacks of appendicitis for eight years, treated with medicine and diets, but without resolution. Eventually, a specialist, Dr. Gunn, was consulted. He told me that I must have my appendix out. So, one day after a game of golf with a friend, I simply went to the hospital, was checked in by Dr. Gunn, and had it taken care of.

Father was so grieved at my defiance that he did not visit me in the hospital. Nevertheless, the surgery was successful, and I could see no reason why I could not go now to my love in Africa. My father was full of trepidation, but he graciously paid my passage and gave me spending money for the long trip. The dignified 75-year-old man wept as he kissed his youngest child goodbye. I was 23, light-hearted, and savouring real freedom for the first time.

Some time later, the telegram arrived at Government House to say that I had safely landed in Kenya, and had been married in Mombasa Cathedral that very day, even though it was a Sunday. Roney had arranged a big wedding, complete with toasts to the bride from several chief justices who had never met me before. Mother put a marriage notice in the Winnipeg newspaper, but changed the date of the wedding from June 20 to June 21, as Sunday weddings were not legal in Canada at that time.

It was the end of an era. Father never saw me again. His term as Lieutenant-Governor ended that same year. Mother came to Kenya for an extended visit with me. Father took his first holiday in more than 10 years, sailing to Jamaica with a friend. Unfortunately, a tropical infection sailed home with him, and left him so weakened that his long, full life came to an end in March 1929, at age 78. Sir James left much of his large estate to charity; and the world plunged on into ten years of economic depression and six of war. A lively, glittering time had left its scent in history, but would come no more. ♦

Elizabeth Aikins Ney was born in 1903 in Winnipeg. She and her husband raised coffee, corn, and sugar cane and had six of their seven children in Africa. When the farm was hit by economic depression, drought, and locusts, they returned to Canada, settling on the West Coast. She now lives in Victoria.

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Pride of the West

A Canadian family battles the Great Depression, 1935

By Pete Loudon

The people who lived in our town will never forget the year 1935. That was when Anyox, British Columbia, 90 miles north of Prince Rupert and 18 miles from the Alaska border, ceased to exist.

The 3,000 people who had lived there had to scramble for new homes and jobs. My family had been there for 10 years. I was almost 12 and my whole world was that smoky, grimy, black-stumped valley where Granby Consolidated Mining, Smelting and Power Company mined copper and operated a smelter. They claimed it was the largest in the British Empire.

Although we were an outpost, we enjoyed amenities unknown to much of rural Canada — electricity, running water and sewers, a hospital, elementary and high school, well-stocked company stores, three churches, a movie house, a library and a hotel. Everyone had a job.

So when Granby said that the operation was closing, we were suddenly casualties of the Great Depression. In a later age society would have claimed severance pay and demanded help in the relocation, but in 1935 the only warmth at our time of departure was in the tears and handclasps of friends. We all got out of Anyox but many families were unable to ship their furniture.

My parents and I caught the Canadian National steamship *Prince George* for Vancouver on 17 March, leaving behind my older brother Bruce and my sister Pat to earn a few more dollars. The luxuries of that shipboard passage were the last we were to know for many years: white-jacketed stewards, fresh linen every day, shiny silver and crystal elegance at every meal and a taxi on the wharf in Vancouver two days later. Then the world turned back into a pumpkin. Dad needed a job. We couldn't face "going on relief". That would have meant $15 a month for the three of us. There were already 100,000 jobless in B.C.

There was an air of desperation in the city of about 230,000 that even I could sense. Jobless men faced being shipped to relief camps organized under the defence department. There were 237 such camps in B.C. at the peak of the Depression with over 18,000 men living in them. The inmates were required to perform public works for food and shelter and 25 cents a day. Complaints against the camps ranged from bad meat, mouldy bread and rotten potatoes to grafting camp officials. Mothers complained to Ottawa that their daughters were without hope of marriage with all the eligible men locked up in camps.

We found an old two-storey and basement wood frame house on Sixth Avenue East, just a few blocks from the street cars on Main Street. It cost $13 a month. The back bedroom had a view of the North Shore mountains and at night a rotating spotlight atop Woodward's department store flashed into the room every few seconds like the gaze of some whirling cyclops. But if some deity were watching us he must have had more desperate cases to keep him busy. For starters, Mom got sick. It was some recurring thing that had put her briefly in hospital in Anyox but the doctors put no name to it. Now she began to decline. Dad, meanwhile, had garnered only a few days at a North Vancouver shipyard where he had been a fitter before going to Anyox. Pat arrived after leaving her job in the company cafe, but her earnings were so slight they could be of little help after she paid about $30 for her steamer passage. She managed to land a waitress job at Scott's Cafe on Granville Street.

That was when Mom got so sick we had to take her to St. Paul's Hospital in an ambulance. I stole roses from a neighbour's yard to take to her — demonstrating, perhaps, how much I needed her guidance. Four days later a phone call came at breakfast time and Pat and Dad and I went in the streetcar to be at her bedside while she died. Later the doctors said it was cancer and she had no chance.

Pat became the mother of the house as well as the breadwinner. Dad was hardly able to face the loss.

Bruce Loudon and "The Pride of the West", the 1925 Chevrolet that carried the Loudon family on its great trek.

93-091

Vancouver Public Library

Reverend Andrew Roddan of First United Church stands before a long line of unemployed men at his soup kitchen in Depression-wracked Vancouver.

Bruce and his chum Peter Chenosky arrived before the funeral. It was June and exam time and I, in my grief, failed almost everything. It was the sort of blow that knocks families apart.

But Dad took hold again and held family meetings where pencil stubs were put to paper, money added, values estimated and various plans proposed for relocating in some new resource area where there might be a better chance of jobs. Pat's boyfriend, Anyox miner Tom MacDonald, appeared from the north and he too was given a chair at the roundtable. Finally, after a great deal of applied logic by Dad and applied enthusiasm by the others, a plan emerged. It was just as well because by now Pat was saving the remnants of the breakfast porridge and mixing it with a can of corn to make fried hodgepodge for lunch.

The plan was bold. I often wonder where Dad found the courage after all he had been through. At age 49 he must have been weary of new starts. We were going to lump our remaining dollars, including whatever we could get by selling all the furniture, and we were going to buy a car and drive to Northern Ontario where a flurry of gold mining promised hope of jobs. Not all of us would go all the way. Pat and I were to be left at Mom's old family home in Toronto.

Dad had never driven a car and the driving experience of Bruce, Peter and Tom could have been measured in hours. But we called an auctioneer who put a flag on the porch, gathered a crowd and almost all our worldly goods were soon carted away. Dad had a pile of greenbacks, which, augmented by donations from the rest of the party, totalled about $300 — more than any of us ever had seen at one time.

Bruce, Pete and Tom went out to kick tires in the car lots and came back with a 1925 Chevrolet touring car, the best they could find for $25 — with a tankful of gas thrown in. The car, immediately named The Pride of the West, was black with cream-coloured spoke wheels, not the racy wire spokes that were to come later but wooden spokes fitted to a metal rim. There were no side windows and the top was made of canvas and built to fold down exposing the front and rear seats to the elements. The isinglass side windows were long gone. The seats were covered with a shiny make-believe leather. The steering wheel had a wooden rim and mounted on it were choke and spark levers the joint operation of which provided the opening entertainment whenever the car was started.

The first step in readying the car was to bolt Dad's steel tool box to the left running board. On the right

side a board was bolted from the front to the rear fender creating a slot for suitcases. At the rear of the car the spare tire and its rack were removed and a huge wooden box was bolted to the car body to carry our food, blankets, linens, towels and a tiny one-burner white gas stove.

It was planned to stay at least every second night in auto courts. The nights we slept in the open, Pat and I would sleep in the car. In the auto courts, where all had to share one room, using sash cord and extra blankets we would erect a "wall" and create a room for Pat.

There was another problem — my dog Mac. No one had the courage to tell a boy who had just lost his mother that now he must give up his dog. It was ruled that Mac, a Scottie, would share the back seat.

One morning in early July we set out, six of us and the dog, leaving behind Mom's grave, the last family house Dad would ever preside over, our friends, our province and — for a time at least — our country. We had to travel through the United States. There was no Trans-Canada Highway and dirt roads prevailed. The U.S. route offered paved roads except for only 200 miles. As the car lurched out of Vancouver, we sang: "We don't know what's coming tomorrow/ It may be trouble or sorrow/ But we travel along/ Singing our song,/ Side by side. . ." It became our theme song.

Trouble wasn't long in starting. We had the first flat tire before we reached the border. Out came the jack and the patching kit. Then when we reached U.S. customs and immigration an inspector asked for proof that Mac had been immunized against rabies and distemper and we were told that to obtain all his clearances might take two weeks.

There was a desperate parley while Mac and I looked at the inspector and he looked at us. I can almost swear Mac wagged his tail just a smidgen while he eyed that conscience-stricken official. The inspector finally threw his cap on the counter, called Dad aside and muttered fiercely, pointing south at the same time. We hit the road.

We must have driven about 40 minutes when the fates took another kick at us: blowout. The tire was ruined. In another hour the spare was flat. We went through the routine at least nine times that first day — jack up car, take off wheel rim, take off tire, take out tube, patch tube, replace tube, pump up tire, replace rim, lower car, stow jack. Our first day's journey was called by darkness just outside Seattle where we sat glumly in an auto court while Bruce and Tom and Pete got the bad news from a nearby service station. Our tires were so old they were perished. We needed new rubber.

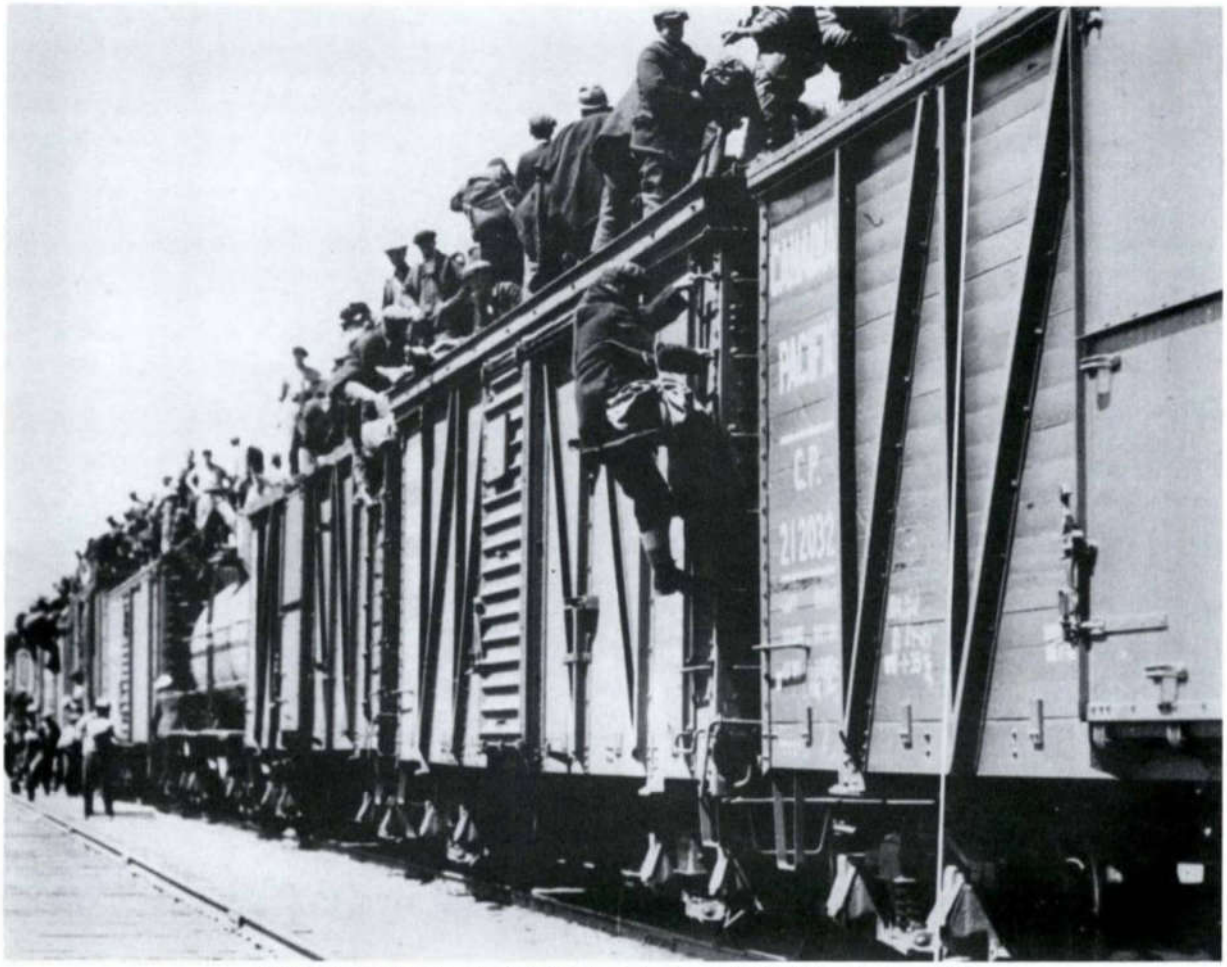
The gloom was so deep as Dad peeled off the bills that I almost failed to appreciate that our Seattle auto court was just opposite an air field, the first any of us ever had seen.

The next day our new tires purred without complaint and we crossed the Cascade Range and met temperatures of more than 100 degrees at Ellensburg, Washington. We wilted. That night we stopped in La Grande, Oregon. We had intended to sleep in the open but saw an auto court with a swimming pool, the first any of us salt chuck swimmers had seen. We couldn't pass it by.

The next day, to counter the heat, I was allowed to ride with my backside on the suitcase rack, one foot in the car and one out, gripping the frame of the canvas

Relief camp workers protest their lot in a May Day parade, Vancouver 1935.

Vancouver Public Library



National Archives of Canada

Relief camp workers board a freight train at Kamloops, British Columbia, June 1935. Their "march on Ottawa" ended in a violent confrontation with the RCMP in Regina.

top above me. I crossed most of the continent in this rodeo style, Pat holding firmly to my belt. When Mac decided to sit beside me, the breeze from our passage carried dog spit to those in the back. But they endured it for me.

Dad had drawn our route to take in Salt Lake City. In Anyox he had enjoyed the broadcasts of the choir of the Salt Lake City Mormon Tabernacle and he was determined that we would visit it. We arrived in mid-week so we couldn't hear the choir even if the Mormons had let our scruffy group into their service. But we did tour the church, viewed the huge pipe organ and, standing at the back of the grand hall of worship, we heard a pin dropped on the altar in a demonstration of the unparalleled acoustics. We visited the Mormon museum and saw the Seagull statue erected by the first settlers in the Brigham Young community. They had prayed to be saved from a plague of locusts and flocks of gulls had arrived to gobble up the pests.

Just a day or two later as we headed into the Mid-west we learned what the Mormons had been up against. We met an army of huge grasshoppers cutting a swath of ruin across the farmlands. For miles the highway was black with them, they squished loudly under our new tires and some leaped into the car, driving Pat into hysterics.

In Salt Lake City we stayed at an auto court that had a stream running through it with wire mesh at either end of the property set into the stream bed. The proprietor told me that was there because he had introduced trout into the stream. I was soon digging hooks and line from my duffel bag. I found a tree branch with some spring in it and lifted a few planks behind our cabin to find some worms.

The stream boasted one good, dark hole which had a diving board extended over it. I crept out the diving board and dropped my line into the muddy waters. A foot-long trout snapped at it immediately and I yanked it up, broke its neck and put it in my back pocket with

CBC Archives

The Happy Gang, broadcasting on CBC airwaves, kept up Canadian spirits during and after the Depression.

the tail sticking out. This brought so much enjoyment to one of the passing guests that he called his wife.

"Emma, come and see this. Here's a real fisherman," he called in a voice that brought half a dozen other watchers. In the limelight for once in my life, I outdid myself. Soon there were half a dozen fish tails sticking out of my back pockets.

That was when Dad appeared and called me from my perch. He gravely explained that I had done a good job in providing a meal for our gang, but hadn't I read the sign at the auto court office? Any trout caught in the stream had to be paid for at so many cents an inch and my catch so far meant Dad had to pay more than $3 to the proprietor. I was ashamed. And later as we neared Laramie, Wyoming and saw signs advertising a rodeo, I didn't argue when Dad said we couldn't afford tickets.

The Midwest weather co-operated. It was just as well because while Tom was trying to catch a nap, he propped his feet above the dash. Some nightmare caused his body to jerk and his foot to break a three-foot arch of glass from the lower section of the windshield. Thereafter, the wind, the bugs and on one occasion, a wave of water from a prairie cloudburst, poured through. By now of course, we were gypsy-bronzed and toughened to the road. The other road people, the hoboes, bums, hitchhikers and even the crowds of capped, unshaven men who sat on every boxcar of passing trains, recognized us as fellow strugglers on the road to salvation and they would cheer and wave. Some of the hitchhikers we even came to remember from day to day as we passed them and then they passed us. As they saw us coming for the umpteenth time they would remember how little space we had to offer and they'd withdraw their thumbs and smile and wave. It was the richer motorists in modern cars who were more likely to jeer and shout, "Put a nickel in it."

The new tires were soon failing. The loud bang of one blowout blew the tire free of the wheel and it ran down the highway ahead of us. So far our engine problems had been nothing we couldn't rectify by tapping

Prime Minister R.B. Bennett confronts the spectre of unemployment in a cartoon by Arch Dale published in the "Winnipeg Free Press", 1935.

the carburetor with a wrench, replacing spark plugs, changing oil and Pat and I praying each night. But one day we "blew a piston". Whether it was a connecting rod or the piston head that fractured is lost to history. We weighed the necessary repair job against our funds and discussed our chances as hitchhikers. Bruce meanwhile went from garage to garage and finally found someone who knew someone who might have some sort of a machine shop in his basement. And for the cost of materials, Bruce, not long out of his apprenticeship, made the parts we needed and saved the day.

Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Nebraska were behind us. Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan loomed ahead. We slept several nights at the roadside and woke one morning to find ourselves in the local ball park.

We became experts on the Burma Shave signs. There was always a series of them perhaps 150 feet apart, each one providing one line of message:

"Lettuce suppose . . . This beets them all . . . Don't turnip your nose . . . At Burma Shave." There were dozens of different catchy messages and when we saw a series of signs in the distance we would all crane our necks to see if the message was a new one.

Nearing Chicago we met our worst moments. It was a warm day and Dad had removed his khaki zipper jacket and placed it beside him over the edge of the car door. We were on a six lane highway and we began to sit up to see the largest city on our trip. Dad must have been dozing. Suddenly he sat up and asked, "Where is my jacket?" There was near panic as we searched the car.

"My wallet is in the pocket. Turn the car around," he said. That time I think we all may have prayed as we headed back over our route. We drove about 20 miles before we saw something on the road. It was the jacket. When we retrieved it, Dad felt the pocket, drew out the wallet and the money was there. We sang all the way into Chicago.

That night it was determined that Bruce, Tom and Peter would be free to roam on their own and if Pat knew they were looking for girlie shows she had the grace to say nothing. Pat and Dad and I walked along State Street entranced by the crowds of people and the casual policemen who carried revolvers in open

holsters. This was the city of Al Capone, the sin centre of the U.S. We walked with care. Finally Dad spied a movie house and the feature film was *State Fair* with Will Rogers. Midway through the movie, three people moved into our row and sat down. The wild ones from the northern frontiers had found Chicago burlesque too raunchy. I don't know how many movie houses there were in Chicago or what the odds were they'd find the one we were attending and sit down next to us, but Pat didn't appear too surprised.

It wasn't long after that we found ourselves in the tunnel under the Detroit River — another wonderment — travelling south into Canada. And finally we were at Toronto.

What must have gone through the minds of my mother's parents, my Uncle Andrew and my Aunts Jean and Mary as we chugged up to their Lappin Avenue home after 16 days on the highway, tanned, shabby, broke and hungry. But they took us in and they kept Pat and me and Mac when The Pride of the West rumbled away for the goldfields.

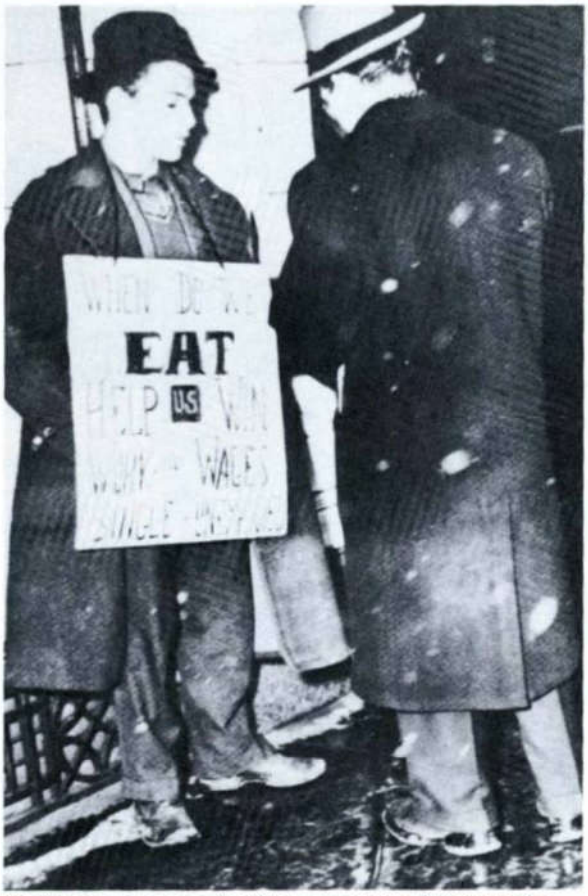
Pat and I stayed in Toronto for a year. I attended grade six at Dovercourt Public School (they overlooked my recent B.C. failure) and I learned to smoke butts and hitch rides on the rear bumpers of the Harbord streetcar, and go for hikes up the Humber and to the zoo at Riverdale. And I learned to play hockey and someone poisoned my dog Mac.

I learned that Scottish Presbyterians went to church twice on Sunday and allowed no cards or whistling on the Sabbath. I learned that Catholics were to be avoided and the anti-Catholic Orangemen paraded on 12 July and when you saw a Jewish rag man with his horse and wagon in the alley, you held three fingers toward him and cried out, "You killed Christ." My gentle little mother who loved everyone had lived here?

When Dad didn't quickly find work in the north he came back and worked that winter shovelling snow for the Poppy Fund, an organization formed to help war vets, earning food vouchers and clothing for me. I was invited to a Poppy Fund Christmas party at the King Edward Hotel. In Toronto I was rich. Pat worked in Eaton's cafeteria where, when she broke a cup, it was taken from her wage packet.

In the north, Peter, Bruce and Tom had a hard 25-below winter in a tent outside Timmins at Gilles Lake, part of a wood and canvas jungle of young men who went each day to the mine gates hoping to be chosen to be miners.

For eating money Peter Chenosky recalled a boyhood skill as a boxer in Prince Rupert. A promoter would match him with a local lad who would regularly clean Peter's clock. But Peter would earn $15 or $20 and Tom and Bruce earned $5 for putting up the posters, an arrangement that Peter would sometimes moan about.



National Archives of Canada

"Buddy, can you spare a dime?" A young victim of the Depression gets a handout on a Toronto street.

By spring Tom was a miner at Kirkland Lake, Peter was on a diamond drill crew out with the blackflies. Bruce and Dad landed jobs at Pamour Gold Mine in the machine shop. Tom fetched Pat from Toronto and there was a wedding and a Niagara Falls honeymoon and a flat in Kirkland Lake where I was to join the newlyweds for grade seven. The world became brighter. We were all on our way to new happiness despite the approaching war.

And what of The Pride of the West that carried us across a continent to new prosperity and a new life? Why Bruce, Peter and Tom sold it during that first winter at Gilles Lake to get groceries. For half price — twelve dollars and fifty cents. ♦

Pete Loudon recently retired after a career as writer and editor with newspapers in British Columbia, including the "Vancouver Sun", "Vancouver Province", "Alberni Valley Times", "Victoria Daily Times" and "Nanaimo Free Press". He is the author of "The Town That Got Lost" (Gray's Publishing Ltd., 1973).

RIVALS FOR FUR

from *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*

By ARTHUR RAY

To this day the Indians have not forgiven the Company for what happened at the beginning of the war, and I think any experienced trader will agree that the Hudson's Bay Company never fully regained their old-time prestige with the Indians. — Philip Godsell

The First World War caused major disruptions to international trade. In the fur industry the interruptions offered a golden opportunity for merchants in North American cities to challenge the traditional dominance of their counterparts in Europe, particularly those in London and Leipzig. They wasted no time in doing so. The restructuring of the international fur-marketing system that resulted had a major impact on the industry in the Canadian North. It served to unleash a tidal wave of competing buyers who flooded the North with cash, shaking the foundations of the old order. The Hudson's Bay Company's very cautious and sluggish response to wartime economic conditions enabled new opponents to entrench themselves. These newcomers deflected an increasing portion of Canadian furs directly to the United States markets. Despite efforts to dislodge the interlopers after the war, the Company never was able to regain undisputed control of the business.

Although producers had an increasing array of outlets through which to dispose of their furs, auctions continued to play a pivotal role in the marketing system. A large proportion of the returns that fur-buying agents, mail-order, and direct-receiving houses collected they eventually disposed of at public auctions. Not surprisingly, many of the leading fur dealers and brokerage houses invested in auction companies. The auctions, especially the large ones, served several important functions. They made it easier for brokers to obtain the assortments of the different types and grades of furs that their clients (dyers and garment manufacturers) needed. Often this process involved buying portions of many different fur lots. Besides simplifying local fur purchasing, the major auctions established regional and world prices. The continuing importance and increasing profitability of the auctions provided the incentive for a growing number of firms to compete for the business. In the ensuing struggle these competitors diverted a greater share of production away from the Hudson's Bay Company's sales. Some of it went to other London rivals; an even larger portion went to the sales floors of new contenders located in the United States and Canada.

By the outbreak of the First World War the most important London rival of the Hudson's Bay Company was C.M. Lampson & Company. Curtis M. Lampson established this firm in London in 1830. Lampson came to the city from the United States originally to serve as an emissary of John Jacob Astor, founder of the American Fur Company. He remained in London and built up a firm of his own. Beginning in 1885, his company began to streamline fur auction procedures by arranging show bundles that were precise mathematical samples (normally 10 per cent) of lots containing as many as 20,000 skins. Also, Lampson initiated the practice of printing sales catalogues that listed the grades of the various lots. These innovations, which the industry as a whole eventually adopted, expedited the sale of large quantities of fur, thereby lowering transaction costs. The company also forged close links with Canadian and American dealers in order to draw furs to its auctions. In 1873 C.M. Lampson & Company opened an agency in New York, represented by James Tinker. Tinker retired in 1878 and Alfred Fraser replaced him. Upon his arrival, Fraser organized Alfred Fraser Incorporated, and this

Glenbow Archives

Interior of Hudson's Bay Company post, Fort Resolution, NWT, 1905-1910.

company represented Lampson & Company until 1936. Of particular importance, Lampson & Company was very successful in its effort to build a consignment business that handled large quantities of North American furs. By the late 1880s Lampson's auctions provided an important outlet for Canadian fur buyers, so important that Canadian newspapers began to report the results of these sales along with those of the Hudson's Bay Company.

A.W. Nesbitt, organized in 1913, quickly became another leading London auction house that handled large quantities of North American furs, ranking third behind the Hudson's Bay Company and C.M. Lampson & Company. F. Huth's firm was another newcomer. Founded in 1809, this fur company did not become involved in the London auction business until 1911. After opening a branch in New York in 1923, Huth became a leading dealer in North American furs. Other fur auction houses were active in London on the eve of the First World War, but most of them specialized in African, Asian, Australian, and South American hides and pelts.

The First World War had an immediate and major impact on the world fur-marketing system when the Board of Trade of the British government temporarily suspended auctions in London during the autumn of 1914. In response, the governor and committee of the Hudson's Bay Company ordered their traders not to buy furs from the Indians during the winter of 1914-15. They believed that the market would collapse once sales resumed. This policy explains the abrupt decline in the value of Canadian fur exports in 1914. Still wary in the spring of 1915, the committee approved the resumption of fur purchasing and sales, but only on a very limited scale compared with pre-war days. Meanwhile, in the United States high levels of employment in wartime industries served to increase the demand, while the supply fell because of the diminished flow of furs from Europe. Fur prices surged upward as a result, encouraging large numbers of American buyers to rush into the Canadian North, where they discovered, to their great delight, that the Hudson's Bay Company men were temporarily barred from competing against them. Norman H. Bacon, who had become the Hudson's Bay Company's commissioner in 1913, recommended that counter-measures be taken immediately. He pleaded with the London directors to reverse their disastrous wartime sales policy.

Samples of HBC fur goods from the 1910-1911 winter catalogue.

Norman Bacon, Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade Commissioner, 1913-1918, pictured in the "Fur Trade Review" in 1919 after he had left the HBC and was President of the New York Fur Auction Sales Corporation.

Bacon wanted the authority at least to sell Company furs in the United States so that he could conduct buying activities more vigorously in Canada. By not taking these steps, the Hudson's Bay Company risked letting the Americans establish themselves in Canada. Furthermore, the Company was missing a lucrative opportunity by not taking advantage of the buoyant North American market. Also, selling in North America would reduce inventory times and thereby lessen speculative risks.

The unwillingness of the governor and committee to give Bacon the freedom of action he needed to conduct a vigorous trade served to emphasize one of the basic underlying problems that plagued the Company's fur-buying and selling operations. The directors' primary interests lay elsewhere, given the changing character of the Company. By the outbreak of the war fur-trading operations ranked third, in terms of gross income, behind land and retail sales. As land sales soared during the wheat boom years, the Company made unprecedented profits, and stockholders received dividends of between 25 and 40 per cent on their shares between 1905 and 1913. These windfall profits made the Company's directors so complacent and out of touch with Canadian realities during this time that even the saleshops languished. Only in 1910 did the Company begin to awaken again, when plans were laid to build a chain of modern department stores. Blueprints were drawn up between 1910 and 1912, and store construction began in Calgary and Vancouver in 1913. So, on the eve of the war the governor and committee were absorbed with retail operations. To make matters worse from Bacon's perspective, the outbreak of war created an even more attractive business opportunity for the Company, when on 9 October 1914 the governor and committee concluded an agreement with the French government which made the Company overseas purchasing agent for France for the duration of the war. This role involved creating overseas subsidiaries and agencies, arranging credits for the French government, organizing steamship service, as well as purchasing and transporting foodstuffs, fuel, lumber, and munitions. In the end the Company handled more than 13 million tons of cargo under this contract.

Given these circumstances, the governor and committee were not prepared to devote their energies to the conduct of the fur trade under the extremely volatile circumstances of the time, nor were they prepared to give their commissioner complete freedom to do so.

With respect to the fur trade, it appears that the governor and committee's only major concern involved preserving London's future as the world entrepôt for furs. They believed that selling Hudson's Bay Company furs in United States markets would undermine that objective, and it was for this reason that they were not sympathetic to Bacon's proposal. Bacon firmly believed, with very good reason, that the governor and committee's decision did not make good business sense. He continued to pressure them to change their policy. Eventually, the committee members relented somewhat and authorized limited sales in the United States beginning in June of 1916. But this reluctant action was short lived. In the winter of 1917 the London committee reverted to its former policy by ordering the suspension of fur sales in Canada and the United States despite the record prices the Company was receiving. Bacon was furious and he resigned 3 October 1918. It would not be until 1924 that the directors authorized a resumption of fur sales in Canada, but even then they set a strict limit of $250,000 per season. Furthermore, these sales were intended only to dispose of furs purchased with cash.

North American fur merchants quickly took advantage of the opportunity to challenge the Hudson's Bay Company. Their struggle to gain the ascendancy added fuel to the inflationary pressures created by the war. New York and St. Louis fur dealers were first off the mark. In 1916 the New York Fur Auction Sales Corporation was incorporated as a joint-stock company. Most of the investors were fur dealers who bought and sold lots on the exchange. London furriers promptly complained about the "Teutonic Flavour" of the organization, charging that Leipzig fur merchants were backing the scheme with the intention of diverting to New York furs that normally went to the German city. Definitely Leipzig firms were well represented in the new auction company. The first president of the New York company was Charles S. Porter, who represented G. Gaudig & Blum of Leipzig. One vice-president, David Steiner, worked for Joseph Steiner Brothers of New York and Leipzig, and the other vice-president, O.G. Becker, came from Becker Brothers Company of Chicago, New York and Leipzig. The treasurer, Edward Spear, was associated with the New York branch of Theodore Thorer Company of Leipzig.

British sensitivity over this issue was understandable. Apart from the international political issues involved, London dealers risked losing a lucrative business to New York. They estimated that on the eve of the war, annually $15 million worth of furs were sent

Excavating for the new Hudson's Bay Company retail store, Vancouver, 1913.

HBC Archives

from New York to London for sale. This represented commissions of roughly $750,000 per year. Although the United States government later seized the assets of the German firms operating in the country, the New York Fur Auction Sales Company continued to conduct highly profitable operations during the war. Somewhat ironically, in 1919, Norman Bacon, the disgruntled former Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade Commissioner, became president of the organization, serving in that capacity until 1921.

In 1916, the same year that fur auctions began in New York, leading fur dealers in St. Louis established the International Fur Exchange by joining the St. Louis-based wholesale fur concern of F.C. Taylor Fur Company, established in 1871, with that of Funsten Brothers & Company, established in 1881. In their struggle for market supremacy, the St. Louis merchants gained a critical advantage over New York. In 1913, Colonel P.B. Fouke of Funsten Brothers secured the exclusive right to market all United States government Alaskan seal skins and other furs. Previously these commodities had been sold in London. The auctions of United States government furs provided the foundation upon which the International Fur Exchange built its business. In 1918 the company handled sales in excess of $32 million. One year later the International Fur Exchange claimed that it conducted what was "probably the largest business in the world for the wholesale purchase and sale of raw furs." That same year the company was reorganized, and an additional $2,925,000 in cash was raised to expand operations. The organizers encouraged companies and individuals who regularly dealt with the International Fur Exchange to buy shares in the new corporation and sent a prospectus to the Hudson's Bay Company.

In Canada only one major auction house was established before the end of the First World War. This was the firm of Little Brothers of Vancouver, founded in 1915. However, other cities, notably Edmonton, Prince Albert, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal, already had been important regional fur-buying centres for many years. A substantial portion of the furs sold in these cities, particularly those of the western prairies, were put to tender by dry-goods wholesalers whose customers consigned furs to them in payment of their accounts.

In spite of the early beginning on the West Coast, Montreal became the dominant fur auction centre. Here, a group of nationally prominent businessmen organized the Canadian Fur Auction Sales Company Ltd. in 1920 with an initial capital investment of $5 million. It was their intention to make Montreal the "St. Louis of Canada". The subscribers included Lord Shaughnessy, chairman of the board of directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway; Sir Herbert Holt of Holt Renfrew and Company and president of the Royal Bank of Canada and the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company; Lorne C. Webster, director of the Merchants' Bank of Canada; P. Cowans of the Montreal stock brokerage firm, McDougall & Cowans; J.W. McConnell, president of the St. Lawrence Sugar Refinery; and W.A. Black, vice-president of Ogilvie Flour Mills Company. In addition, several prominent Montreal fur dealers, including Holt Renfrew and Company, held interests in the concern. The organizers of the new company did not intend to limit themselves to the consignment business. They also planned to buy furs and engage in fur-dying activities. The first auction took place in the Rose Room of the Windsor Hotel on 22 March 1920; it was a resounding success, exceeding all expectations. The new Montreal company sold a total of $5,093,120 worth of furs, many pelts at prices that exceeded those obtained at the most recent auctions in St. Louis and New York.

During the inflationary period the auction business became ever more lucrative; prices soared and sales

HBC Archives

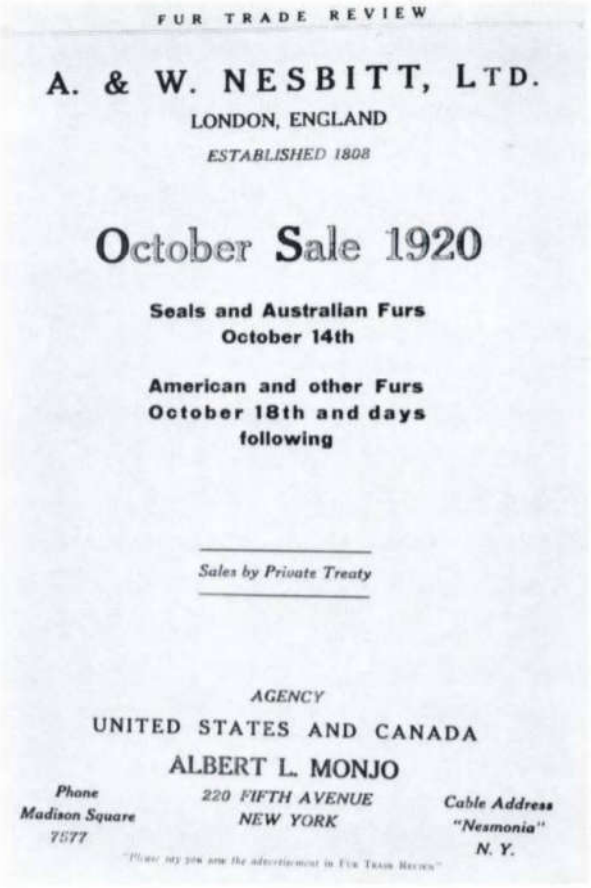
Edmontonians queue up for the Hudson's Bay Company land sales drawing, May 1912.

volumes skyrocketed. In 1918 the International Exchange Corporation of St. Louis earned a gross income of about $1.2 million from commissions. Just before the market crashed late in 1920, the February sale in St. Louis disposed of more than $27 million worth of fur. With commissions averaging 5 per cent of sales, this one event generated a gross revenue for the auction house of about $1.35 million. Profits of this magnitude lured others into the business, raising competition to a frenzied pitch. Auction houses waged the struggle in a variety of ways. Most spectacular were the perks that they offered to the buyers and agents who attended the sales. For example, on 11 October 1919 the New York Fur Auction Sales Corporation held a formal dinner for 800 buyers at the Hotel Pennsylvania. The company provided live entertainment and a fur fashion show.

By 1920 London and North American auction houses had been so successful in building up their consignment business that they forced the Hudson's Bay Company to abandon its 250-year-old policy of selling only "house" furs (those owned by the Company). Accordingly, in 1921 the Company announced that it would offer a consignment service. During the summer of 1922 Frank C. Ingrams, secretary of the Hudson's Bay Company, arrived in New York to promote the new venture.

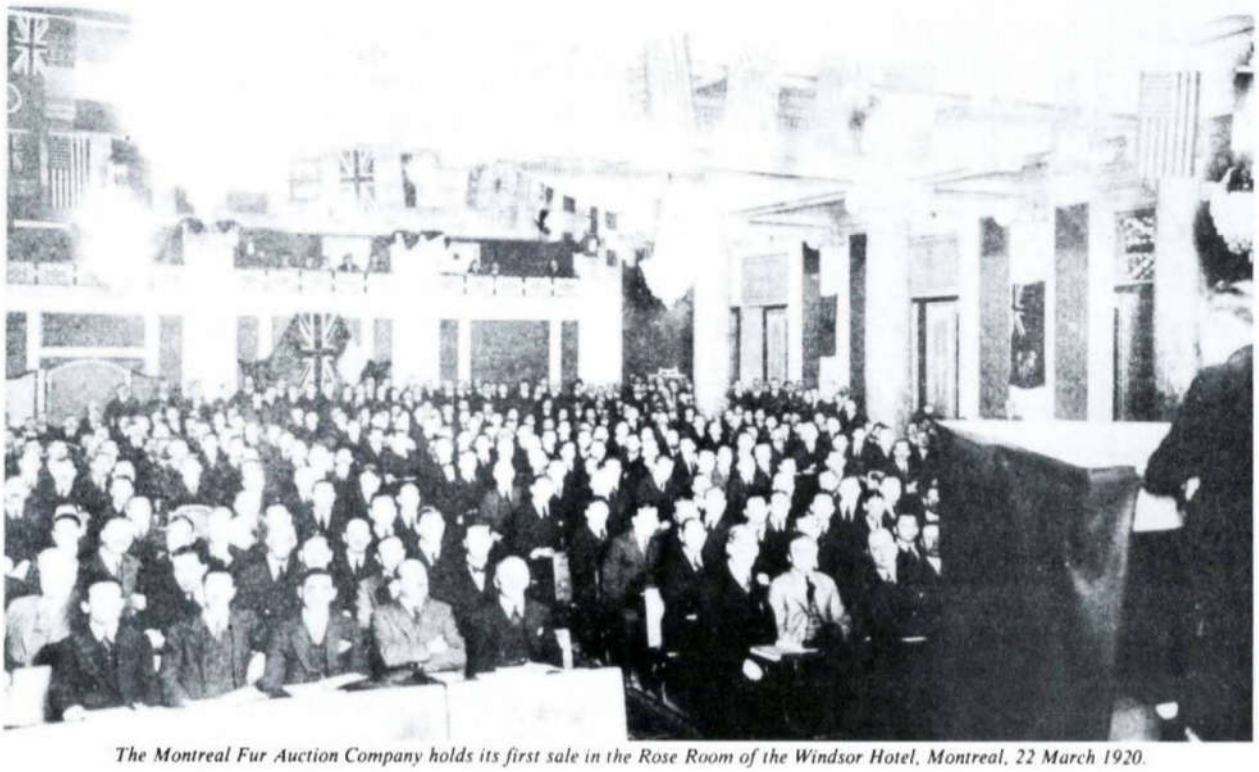
In the scramble for furs between 1914 and 1920, buying became highly speculative and was financed largely by the lavish use of credit. When the inflationary bubble burst late in 1920, overextended buyers suffered heavy losses as market values plummeted below the prices shippers and buying agents had paid for their furs. A panic hit the industry and many fur auction companies faced financial ruin in 1921. The International Fur Exchange of St. Louis was one of those hardest hit by the collapse. On 26 March 1921 its debts totalled $18,050,046; the organization was bankrupt. The New York Fur Auction Sales Company was also in difficulty, as were many raw-fur dealers throughout the United States and Canada. In 1921 the Hudson's Bay Company reported that United States banks lost over $10 million because of bankruptcies in the industry. Company officials blamed the problem on the reckless use of credit in North America. Although speculation and the problems that it generated undoubtedly were most strongly felt in the United States, the British market was not immune, and creditors forced the liquidation of A.W. Nesbitt in 1920.

Meanwhile, during the war the mushrooming demand for furs, the international and interurban struggle for increased shares of Canadian output, and the liberal extension of credit by banks, auction houses, and leading fur-buying agencies all served to set off a short burst of unprecedented competition in the Canadian North. Large and small operators entered the fray. Nowhere was the struggle more intensive than in the fur-rich Athabasca-Mackenzie district. Here all the major players were active.



One of the most important newcomers to appear on the scene was J.H. Bryan. According to the veteran Colonel J.K. Cornwall, Bryan arrived in the Edmonton area shortly before 1914, when he operated as a small cash buyer. Cornwall claimed that Bryan had no prior experience with the industry, either through association or by experience, but he compensated for these shortcomings by being industrious, sober, and a good listener. Supposedly Bryan obtained his education quickly from other traders who spoke freely when drinking. He also had the advantage of learning on a rising market.

Following his initial fur-buying tour Bryan ventured to New York where he made important business connections and obtained substantial financial backing. He returned to Fort Chipewyan and began to build a string of posts in the Athabasca-Mackenzie district. Between 1915 and 1917 Bryan established operations at Fort Chipewyan, Fond du Lac, Fort Resolution, and Fort Rae. In 1918 he expanded to Fort Simpson, Fort



The Montreal Fur Auction Company holds its first sale in the Rose Room of the Windsor Hotel, Montreal, 22 March 1920.

Nelson, and Fort Norman. The same year he convinced Lamson and Hubbard Corporation of Boston to invest over $1.5 million in a Canadian operation. The Boston company bought his posts and retained Bryan as manager. At the time Lamson and Hubbard (incorporated in 1882) was one of the largest raw-fur-dealing companies in the United States. After a reorganization of the company in 1918, they registered their Canadian operations in Edmonton under the name Lamson and Hubbard Canadian Company Ltd. (hereinafter Lamson and Hubbard).

With considerable fanfare, Lamson and Hubbard immediately launched an expansion program. Following the lead of the Hudson's Bay Company, heavy investments were made in the development of a major transportation system in the Athabasca-Mackenzie region for the purposes of carrying the company's own cargo and that of the general public. Lamson and Hubbard wanted to develop the same capacity as that of its London-based rival. Accordingly, in the spring of 1919 Lamson and Hubbard began the construction of a stern-wheeler for use between Fort Smith and Fort McPherson. Besides this large craft, a steam tug and tow barges were built for the Liard River; they introduced two large gas boats on Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake and purchased a steamer for operations between Fort McMurray and Fort Fitzgerald. In addition, the company invested nearly $27,700 to import from San Francisco two caterpillar tractors and eight three-ton iron trailers for use on the Fort Smith portage. Also they employed two gas-powered tugs and forty to fifty scows of ten- to twenty-ton capacity to haul cargo between this portage and the end of steel. As early as the summer of 1919 Lamson and Hubbard shipped 450 tons of trade merchandise into the Athabasca-Mackenzie region. Clearly the Hudson's Bay Company faced a formidable new rival in the area.

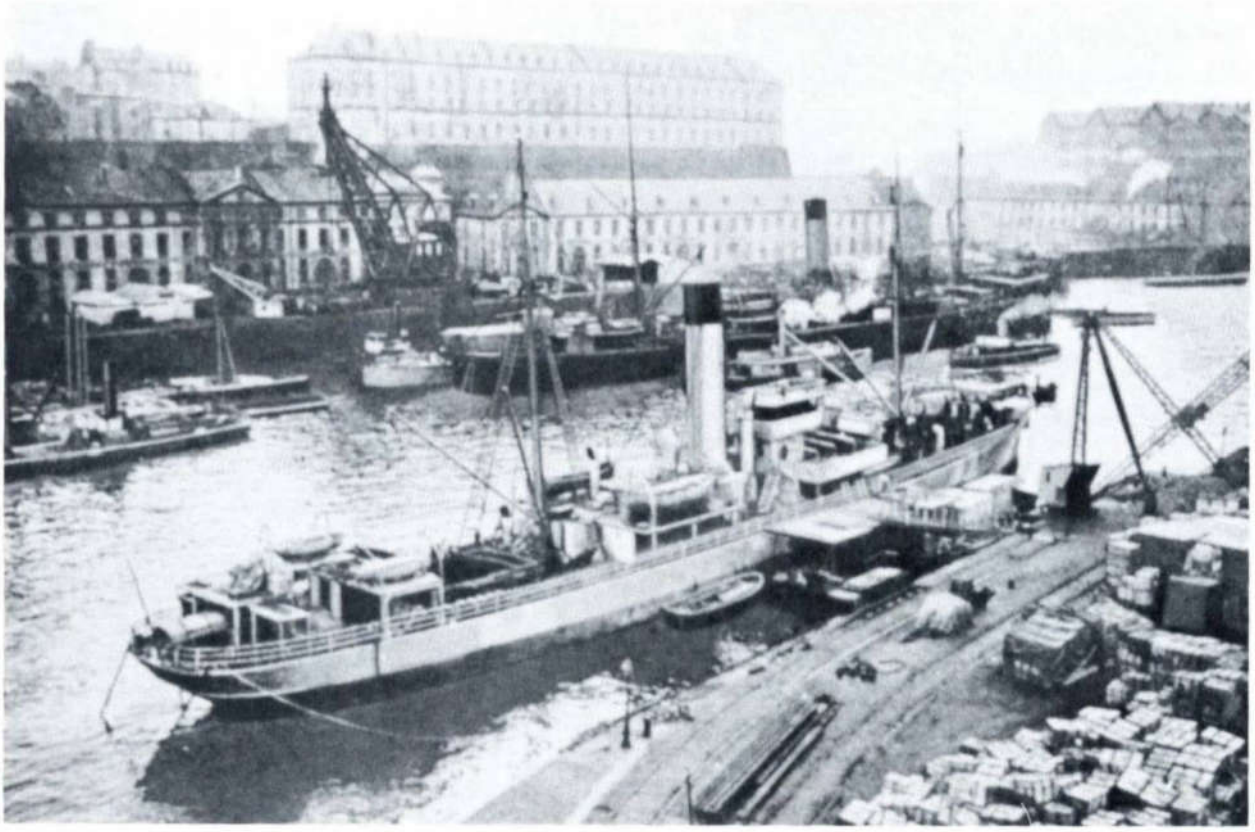
The Northern Trading Company of Edmonton became the third-leading contender in the region. The early history of this company is not entirely clear. What is known is that in 1913 the Northern Trading Company bought the firm of Hislop and Nagle which had been active throughout the Mackenzie River valley as early as 1882. After this merger Colonel Cornwall developed a close association with the Northern Trading Company, eventually becoming one of the driving forces behind it. Cornwall first came to northern Alberta during the Klondike goldrush. He stayed behind in the Peace River area, where he joined forces with Fletcher Bredin and built a string of small trading posts. In 1903 Cornwall and his partner sold their operation to Revillon Frères and immediately thereafter he turned his energies towards building the Northern Transportation Company. In 1904 his first

steamer, the *Midnight Sun*, was operating on the Lesser Slave Lake River. The Northern Transportation Company expanded operations rapidly thereafter. By 1911 the Northern Trading Company shipped large outfits into the Mackenzie District using the colonel's riverboat service. In order to challenge effectively the Hudson's Bay Company and Lamson and Hubbard, in 1918 the Northern Trading Company obtained financial backing from A.W. Nesbitt of London and concluded a fur-marketing arrangement with this firm.

The struggle for dominance of the Athabasca-Mackenzie riverboat business and fur trade under wartime conditions affected the local industry in many different ways. Most important, favourable transportation rates served to open the area to small fur buyers. Consequently, cash fur buying became widespread for the first time. According to Colonel Cornwall, before 1914 these cash transactions were of only minor significance beyond the immediate hinterland of Edmonton. The outbreak of war and the Hudson's Bay Company's reactions to wartime market conditions in London set the stage for a major, if temporary, shift in business practices. When the governor and committee ordered their men not to buy furs during the winter of 1914-15, they also informed them that they were not to extend the usual lines of credit to the Indians. When Commissioner Bacon prepared to carry out the latter order, his close adviser, Nathaniel MacKenzie, a veteran trader, warned him not to do so. MacKenzie pointed out that "it was to the past loyalty of these Indians and their forefathers that the Company owed its prosperity, and that the line of policy embarked upon could not help but be looked upon by the natives as a flagrant breach of trust." He added: "that by the time word reached many of the posts much of the debt would already have been given out. Why not," he counselled, "instead of appealing to the Indian Department to come to the aid of its charges, set an example to other panic-stricken firms with a 'business as usual' slogan?"

Writing about this episode at a later date, Hudson's Bay Company trader Philip Godsell observed: "MacKenzie knew that, orders or no orders, many of the older traders would ignore them to a certain point and risk dismissal rather than see the Indians stuck. Again he argued that Indian debt, instead of being entirely cut out, should be confined to necessities, and that prevailing panic fur values be disregarded and the Indians be paid sufficient for the skins to enable them to get along until the worst of the crisis was over."

S.S. "Nascopie" loading munitions of war at Brest for delivery to Archangel, December 1916.



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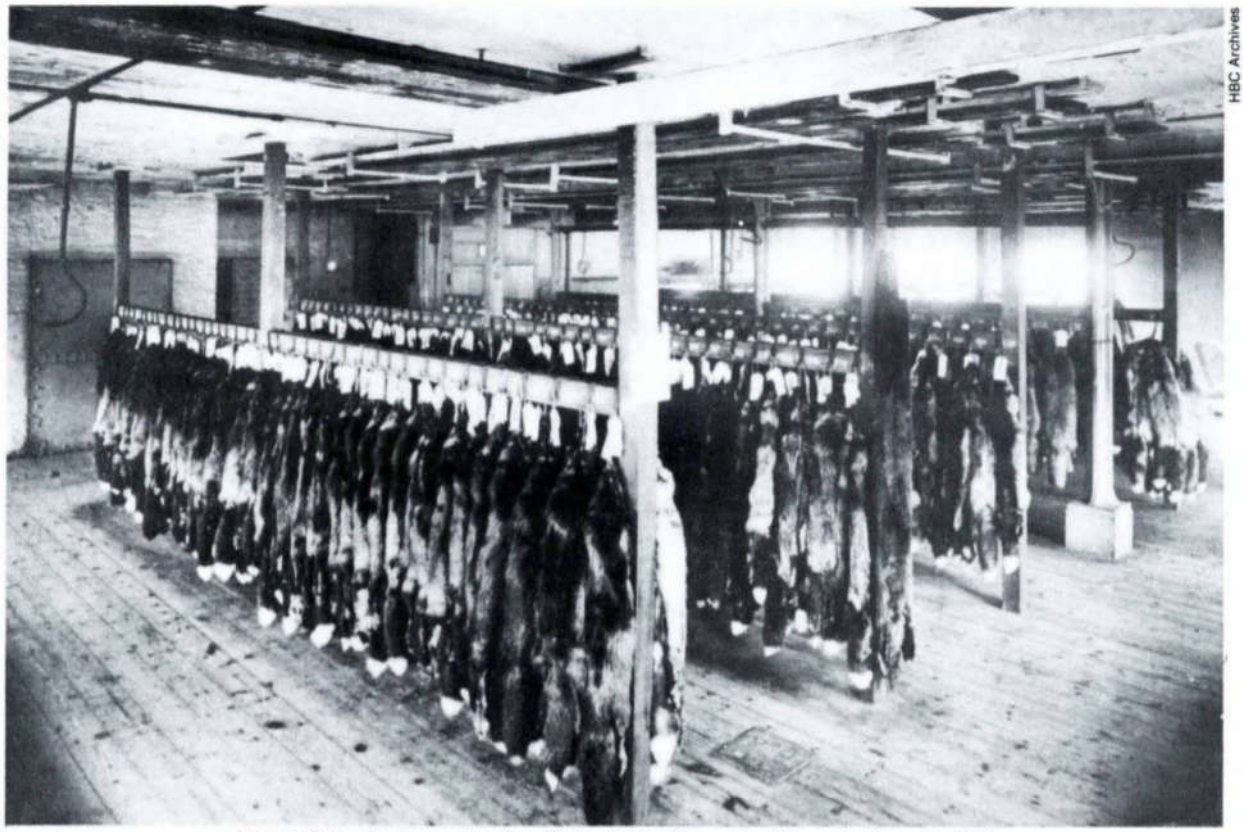
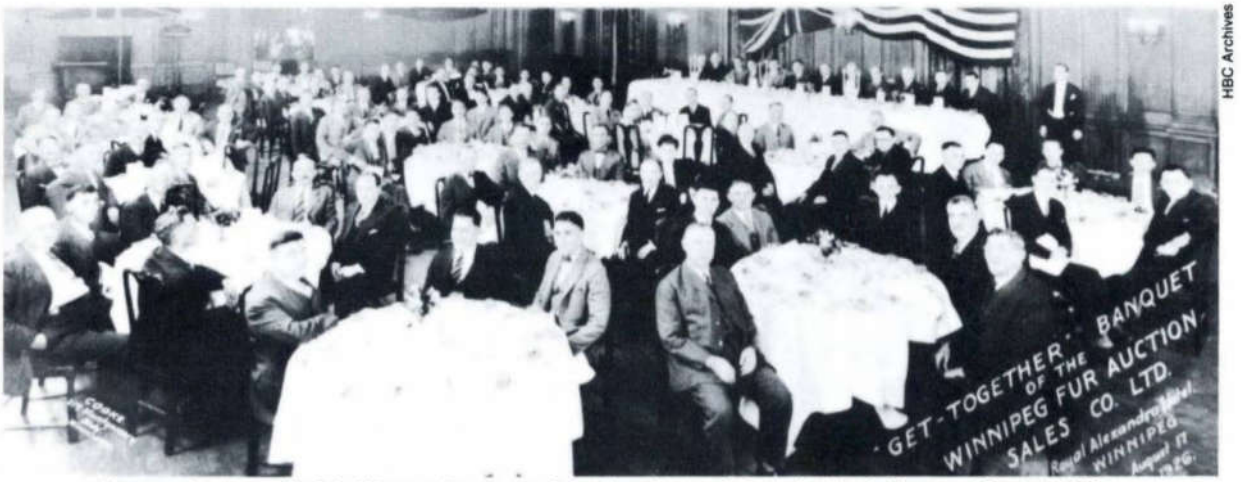


Fur warehouse displaying silver fox, Hudson's Bay House, Lime Street, London, circa 1924.

MacKenzie's assessment was accurate. When Bacon subsequently ignored his advice and set about carrying out the order: "many of the post managers risked dismissal by giving out a little debt". But, as Godsell recorded: "usually . . . it was not shown as such in the books but was entered in a 'Purgatory Ledger' and never saw the light of day. Others spent much of their own earnings in doing what they could to alleviate the Indians' distress." We shall never know the extent to which the credit reductions Bacon appears to have achieved were offset by these clandestine actions of the older officers. Besides taking these extreme actions, the governor and committee set the 1914-15 purchasing tariff 83 per cent below the March market prices to permit modest fur buying in the hope of retaining Indian loyalty. Naturally, the competition obtained most of the fur. The Company's volume dropped 50 per cent below that of the previous year.

This was not just a temporary setback. By all accounts the Company's officers suffered permanent damage to their prestige in the eyes of the Indians. According to Godsell: "the opposition traders . . . took the fullest possible advantage of this situation, especially when the Indians visited them and asked for twine and gunpowder in debt." On these occasions: "Why," they asked, "do you not go to the Company's traders and remind them of the promises they always made the Indians to come to the rescue whenever they were stuck? When these traders first came amongst you they only had a small ship and enough goods to build a small post! Now they are everywhere. Did they not make this money out of the Indians?" Godsell complained that "it was logical propaganda and it was driven home with emphasis. Hardly ever did we refuse debt without having this, and other things the traders were supposed to have said, dinned into our ears." He added: "I think any experienced trader will agree that the Hudson's Bay Company never fully regained their old-time prestige with the Indians."

Bryan, with his Boston and New York financial backing, was one of the men who led the assault when the Company faltered. He mounted a major cash-buying operation in the Athabasca-Mackenzie area. Colonel Cornwall reported: "Bryan found the North ready for his cash. Prices had been down — low, in fact, no value was attached to fur. Some Hudson's Bay men acted as his agents, took his cash and were satisfied to let him take the fur. Some other traders did the same. They also sold him their fur. He had agents everywhere and trusted his money in a most reckless manner to every Tom, Dick and Harry who laid claim to fur buying. He secured a great deal of fur. He took



HBC Archives

"Get-Together Banquet" of the Winnipeg Fur Auction Sales Co. Ltd., Royal Alexandra Hotel, Winnipeg, 17 August 1926.

it East and sold it at an unheard of profit." With fur prices shooting upward on the North American markets, it was possible to get away with this reckless approach to the business.

When Lamson and Hubbard bought control of Bryan's business in 1918, they expanded their cash-purchasing operations. The Hudson's Bay Company, the Northern Trading Company, and the "lesser operators" did likewise. Many years later Colonel Cornwall reflected on this development: "It is not hard to imagine what virgin soil the cash buyer had to work with. He proceeded to cultivate it, advised the Indians to take cash, disregard his debt, posing as a saviour and a friend of the trapper, illustrating his arguments by paying more in cash than the trapper could get in trade at the Posts." He added: "The cash buyer failed to advise the trapper that he had been staked months previously, that he had been carried over the lean years when fur was scarce, that no cash buyer came when fur was down, and a dozen more good and sufficient reasons."

In the bidding war Lamson and Hubbard and Northern Trading Company tended to be "price setters" and the Hudson's Bay Company a "price taker." Cash buyers from these three concerns, and "lesser operators" combed the entire district, but they were most active in the Athabasca area. On the eve of the First World War one-third of the Hudson's Bay Company's Athabasca returns were bought with cash in Edmonton. Beyond this city, Fort McMurray was the most important centre for cash buying. Hudson's Bay Company records indicated that in 1920 prices were very high there because cash buyers arrived from Edmonton on every train. Even well beyond Fort McMurray cash buying was highly competitive. In 1920 Hudson's Bay Company officials complained that at Fort Simpson the "practise of bidding on furs" was driving cash prices upward. According to Company inspector T.P. O'Kelly: "the practise is certainly open to criticism. Beginning with the white trappers, it has extended to the Indians and if continued, will result in estranging their loyalty to the Company." Although cash trading generally did serve to undermine the traditional customer loyalties of the Indians, some of the Hudson's Bay Company post managers devised innovative ways of taking advantage of the new development. For instance, in 1919-20 Americans from the Yukon area visited the hinterland of Fort McPherson and bought large quantities of fur for cash. Regarding the reaction of the Fort McPherson post manager to this development, O'Kelly noted: "McPherson had resorted to an ingenious method of receiving cash deposits from the Indians and allowing them 5%. In this way, some of the money paid out by the Yukon traders was collected by the Company and used for purchasing furs. Providing the Post has the goods desired by the Indians, most of the credit will be taken out in trade."

By 1920 the prices Indians were obtaining for their furs (in cash and goods) had risen to the point where they had much more purchasing power than they needed to satisfy their demand for goods even though their consumption of "store foods" was increasing. Some of them responded by curtailing their output. Others continued to collect furs, and many situations developed in which the traders found themselves in debt to the Indians. For example, in 1920 the Hudson's Bay Company traders owed their hunters $16,000 at Fort Nelson, $4,100 at Fort Simpson, $3,000 at Fort Liard, and from $2,000 to $3,000 at the other posts on the lower Mackenzie River.

The Hudson's Bay Company traders handled Indian credit balances in a variety of ways. At most posts the Indians' surplus furs were put on account, and the

Glenbow Archives

Imperial Oil monoplane at Fort Smith, NWT, 1920. The Hudson's Bay Company declined to participate in a joint air service between Edmonton and the Mackenzie Valley.

trappers subsequently drew against their deposit. However, this led to confusion in the records because bookkeepers often treated these transactions as credit trade. In other words, they treated Indian debt and credit purchases the same way in the accounts. In British Columbia they used a different procedure. There the Company gave Indians tokens or script. This was the common practice in the trade before 1870. In 1918 the Hudson's Bay Company adopted this as a general policy. However, this arrangement proved to be unsatisfactory to many Indian bands. For example, in the 1920s Indians living in northern Ontario demanded payment in cash for that portion of their returns that exceeded their debts and purchases. They wanted the money so that they could deal with competing merchants who offered better prices or carried goods that the Company did not stock.

Although cash trading became an integral aspect of the business, barter continued to account for most of the traffic in fur. For example, the Hudson's Bay Company's 1918 annual report for the Mackenzie River District showed that cash purchases accounted for under 16 per cent of the turnover in 1917 and just below 14 per cent in 1918. No doubt this is a conservative picture. Cash buying was probably more important to the opposition, given that the district report stated the Hudson's Bay Company was losing its share of this trade.

Although credit barter remained a key component of the business during this highly competitive period, debt losses during the war were lower than those of the preceding decade for several reasons. The sharp drop in 1914 was the direct consequence of the governor and committee's order not to buy furs during the winter of 1914-15. That order included the instruction not to give credit. This combined action also explains why the debt/return ratio tripled during the same year. Indians were unable to dispose of most of their collections to the Company.

As soon as the directors lifted their trading restrictions in 1915, the officers made a concerted effort to regain their native clients. They extended credit liberally once again. Credit/barter transactions accounted for over 50 per cent of the Hudson's Bay Company's sales in the Mackenzie River district in 1917 and 1918. This represented a major retreat from the no-credit policy of 1914. The commissioner urged district managers to keep a tight rein on credit, but post managers usually claimed that it was necessary to exceed the limits they had been given because their opponents were issuing debt very liberally. Not surprisingly, the amount of credit that had to be written off increased, but it remained well below the levels of the immediate

pre-war years. Also, the debt loss/returns ratio remained low during the war.

As in earlier years the debt load varied greatly among the districts. The James Bay District shouldered the biggest burden. In 1918 this district had debt losses of roughly $50,728, or 61 per cent of the total, and in 1919 they amounted to $31,380 or 34 per cent. The reason for the discrepancy was that the region suffered from severe depletion of fur and game and its native residents had become heavily dependent on a single resource — fox. Poor fox years created havoc.

The efforts of competing traders to curry the favour of Indians through competitive merchandising posed another set of problems for the Hudson's Bay Company. Fur prices rose more rapidly than did those for merchandise, resulting in a sharp increase in the consumer demand of native people. This development aggravated an old problem — the Company's transportation capacity could not be expanded rapidly in the short term. Transportation constraints were particularly severe at the outer limits of the network where the all-important outposts were located. Apart from the considerations of cost, wartime manpower and supply shortages made it impossible to enlarge substantially the cargo capacity. Accordingly, Commissioner Bacon did not favour price cutting as a strategy to win Indian favour. A partial solution involved importing more high-priced and low bulk "fancy goods." This was a favourite tactic of many of the Company's opponents.

As in the previous eras of competition, camp trading, tripping, and the operation of outposts became commonplace as everyone made a concerted effort to carry the trade to the native people. The difficulty was that this practice also increased the demand for labour at the very time when enlistments in the armed services and conscription reduced the number of experienced traders who were available. The newer firms, most notably the Northern Trading Company and Lamson and Hubbard, tried to obtain some of the men they needed by luring them away from the Hudson's Bay Company. As an enticement, and to reward employees for their efforts, these rival firms paid men according to the results they obtained. The Company's officers had no such incentives, since the Company had abandoned the profit-sharing plan for officers in 1893. To meet this new challenge the Hudson's Bay Company introduced a bonus scheme for its men. Besides providing incentives, bonuses were used to supplement the wages of older men, who resented the fact that the Company often had to pay new recruits higher salaries in the fiercely competitive labour market. Despite these measures the Company still faced labour shortages and it had to recruit natives to manage their outposts, run tripping operations, and engage in camp trading. Competition for these men was keen. At the end of the war trippers received $8 per day, not including

HBC Archives

Louis Romanet, Fort Chimo, 1914.

provisions and food for their dog teams. These high wages of course added considerably to the cost of collecting furs.

More problematic for the Hudson's Bay Company, by 1919 "native" (mixed-blood) men managed a high proportion of its outposts. For instance, natives directed nearly all twenty-nine of the Hudson's Bay Company's Mackenzie River District outposts. There were serious drawbacks to employing natives in this capacity. Louis Romanet, acting manager of the Mackenzie River District, said they were "keen" but paid no attention to costs. There were several reasons. Most native men were illiterate and they had been given no training in simple bookkeeping. Even more troublesome, they

Sorting furs at Funsten Bros., St. Louis.

extended credit too liberally to their kinfolk, and often they paid them too much for their furs. For these various reasons, employing native outpost managers added to the costs of buying furs.

The general trends outlined above had a differential impact on the North. The Athabasca-Mackenzie region was one of the areas that was most strongly affected; for as indicated, all the major players engaged in a fierce contest for the riches of the district. Between 1917 and 1922 the Hudson's Bay Company estimated the annual shares of the local "primary fur trade" that various competitors were securing in the Mackenzie River District. These were the furs that the Company obtained directly from trappers, in contrast to "secondary trade" which came through the hands of other traders. In the lower Mackenzie River valley below Great Slave Lake the Hudson's Bay Company's share ranged from 40 to 75 per cent. Lamson and Hubbard and Northern Trading Company were the only significant opponents in this area except at Fort McPherson and Arctic Red River, where Aklavik merchants drew away some of the business. In the upper Mackenzie River area the Hudson's Bay Company's portion was as low as 29 per cent in 1922, and many more rival traders operated. At Fort Chipewyan, for instance, the Company faced twenty-seven opponents.

By the close of the war the volume of "secondary trading" in the two districts was substantial. For example, in 1918 Revillon Frères of Edmonton bought the Northern Trading Company's entire collection of white fox and marten for $125,000. At Fort Chipewyan in 1920 trader Colin Fraser sold 75 per cent of his winter collection to Lamson and Hubbard for $40,000. The same year Fraser sold his entire spring returns to the latter company for an unspecified amount. In 1920 most of the Hudson's Bay Company's Athabasca returns were bought in Edmonton from other traders and dealers.

Another important wartime development in the region was the appearance of white trappers in significant numbers for the first time. At least one of the major competing firms, Lamson and Hubbard, was instrumental in bringing about this change, because it brought in these trappers specifically to break the native monopoly and increase output. By doing so the company contributed to a problem that already was becoming acute in many areas; for as fur prices rose, increasing numbers of miners, prospectors, and loggers became involved in trapping and trading on a part-time basis. In fact, when prices peaked in 1920, many miners abandoned their diggings in the quest for fur. The problem was that most of these newcomers were interested only in making quick profits. Thus, they were ruthless hunters and trappers, and they contributed in a substantial way to resource depletion. Louis Romanet regarded them as the scourge of the North because of the harmful impact they had on the environment. Also, they proved to be economic trend-setters for local native people in terms of consumer-spending and fur-selling practices (preferring to deal in cash).

They were particularly important in this regard after the First World War.

Outside the Athabasca-Mackenzie region, the construction of the second transcontinental railway system, beginning in 1910, had more impact on the Northern fur trade than any other development that took place between 1885 and the end of the First World War. East of Lake Nipigon the construction of the main line and various feeders had the effect of shifting the "frontier trading district" of Ontario northward some 100 to 300 kilometres and west of the lake up to fifty kilometres. In Manitoba construction of the Hudson Bay Railway continued, and rail service extended beyond The Pas toward the lower Nelson River by the end of the war. Beyond Manitoba railways reached through the North Saskatchewan River valley, and one small feeder line extended from Prince Albert northwestward to Big River. The reason this phase of railway construction was so important was that it made all the southern portions of Old Rupert's Land readily accessible to small fur buyers with limited means just as wartime price inflation began.

The small operators were not the only newcomers to cash in on the wartime bonanza. In 1919 Sir Herbert Holt obtained the backing of a syndicate of "prominent Montreal businessmen", and he reorganized Holt, Renfrew and Company which already had retail fur outlets in Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. The company made an offering of $2 million worth of stock equally divided among common and preferred shares and a $225,000 bond issue. Holt intended to use the capital he raised to expand retail activities, to secure a larger share of the company's furs directly from trappers, and to expand the company's fur-farming activities. In this way the Montreal merchants took advantage of wartime opportunities to renew their challenge to the Hudson's Bay Company in the field as well as on the auction floor.

It is widely recognized that the First World War marked a major turning point in Canadian economic history. At the end of the war the American economy had developed to the point that growth was self-sustaining. In contrast, Britain suffered heavy financial losses in the war and its commercial empire began to decline. As the United States economy expanded, Americans began to invest heavily in Canada. It is estimated that in 1900 British capital accounted for 85 per cent of the total foreign investments in Canada and that from the United States 14 per cent. These were the days when Britain was the great exporter of capital. By 1920 British investments stood at 53 per cent and those of the United States at 44 per cent. These heavy financial investments facilitated economic development, massive immigration, and urbanization, leading historians correctly to regard the period 1896 to 1921 as the time of the great Canadian transformation. The rise of New York and St. Louis and the re-emergence of Montreal as leading centres in the North American fur trade have to be understood in this context. The North American challenge to London was symptomatic of these larger economic processes.

HBC Archives

Trader Colin Fraser photographed in old age by Lorene Squire.

(From *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, published by University of Toronto Press, 1990).

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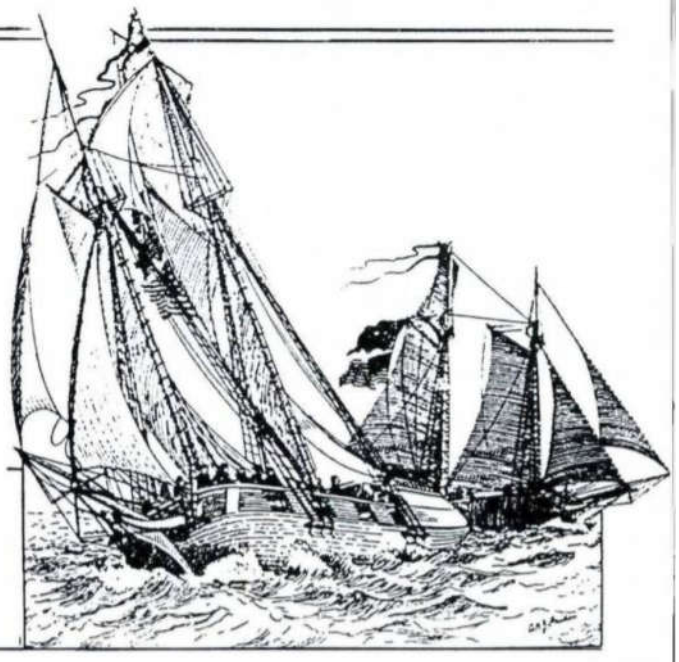
War On The Lakes

By Bob Malcomson



During the summer of 1814 the schooner *Nancy* came to a fiery end in Georgian Bay. After a particularly long career on the Great Lakes, the ship became briefly the centre of a fight for control of the fur trade. She did not perish unvindicated. A little known, but spectacular act of retribution caused heads to roll, literally, and accentuated the determination of the men who made war on each other during the third year of the 1812 War.

The story of the *Nancy* began when the partnership of Forsyth, Richardson and Co. ordered the construction of a schooner at the British post at Detroit in 1789. John Richardson went there himself to oversee the project. He was pleased with the project as his comments on 23 September of that year reveal:

> The schooner will be a perfect masterpiece of workmanship and beauty. The expense to us will be great, but there will be the satisfaction of her being strong and very durable. Her floor timbers, keel, keelson, stem and lower uttock are oak. The transom, sternpost, upper uttocks, top timbers, beams and knees are all red cedar. She will carry 350 barrels.

The ship's rig was that of a topsail schooner, meaning that a pair of square sails adorned the upper portions of each of her two masts. Fore and aft sails formed the larger part of *Nancy*'s topgear, thereby allowing her to manoeuver closer to the wind among the many tight spots along Great Lakes shorelines. Manoeuverability was an important asset in her design because the *Nancy* was meant to meet the needs of the fur trade, carrying supplies to the frontier outposts on Lakes Huron and Michigan and returning to the Detroit/Amherstburg area and the Niagara Peninsula with cargoes of lucrative pelts. The narrow straits and shallow anchorages of the Great Lakes made sailing a challenge. The *Nancy* was built to meet that challenge.

Richardson and his cohorts put good money into their ship. Although no plans for the schooner have survived, it has been determined that she was about 25 metres in length and six metres at the beam. She was stylishly outfitted with the figure-head of a lady jauntily wearing a fashionable feathered hat, carved in New York. Upon her first round trip to Sault Ste. Marie during June and July of 1790, Richardson boasted that the vessel was spoken of "in such a high strain of encomium as to beauty, stowage and sailing, that she almost exceeds my expectations".

Unfortunately, the rigours of commerce caused the *Nancy* to be sold by her original owners and then resold until she came into the possession of the North West Fur Company just before 1800. From then until the outbreak of the War of 1812 the schooner plied the lakes from Fort Erie to the western depots. A report on shipping prepared in 1812 for Major-General Isaac Brock listed the *Nancy* as a schooner of 100 tons moored at McIntosh's wharf, at Moy, a settlement across the river from the then American-held Detroit. She had survived on the Great Lakes for 23 years, a record of longevity unique among vessels of the period.

The *Nancy* was acquired by the British military and put into war service. As a lightly armed troop and supply transport she criss-crossed Lake Erie and brought cargoes containing powder and blankets, tools and rum to Fort Michilimackinac on Mackinac Island. This strategic garrison, lying between Lakes Huron and Michigan, was considered the Gibraltar of the

Great Lakes. Major-General Brock had realized the importance of Mackinac and, as one of the first actions of the war, ordered it captured from American hands. The order was successfully executed by a company under the command of Captain Richard Bullock in July of 1812. British merchants, reliant upon the uninterrupted stream of furs from the west, praised Brock and breathed a sigh of relief.

A successor to Brock, Governor General George Prevost, saw the importance of Fort Michilimackinac too, as his comments reveal:

> Its geographical position is admirable. Its influence extends and is felt amongst the Indian tribes at New Orleans and the Pacific Ocean; vast tracts of country look to it for protection and supplies, and it gives security to the great establishments of the North-west and Hudson's Bay Company by supporting the Indians on the Mississippi . . .

It was during a routine trip from Mackinac to Amherstburg early in October of 1813 that the *Nancy* came close to being captured by the Americans. Unknown to her commander, Captain Alexander McIntosh, the war had taken a startling turn only weeks before. Led by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's battle-cry of "Don't give up the ship", the American squadron on Lake Erie had captured the entire British naval force near Put-In-Bay on 10 September. The Americans quickly occupied Amherstburg, the British command centre near Detroit, and were lying in wait at the St. Clair River for the arrival of the *Nancy*. McIntosh barely managed to escape. A brisk skirmish with a shore battery, a frustrating fight back up the rapids of the St. Clair, followed by nine days of storms on Lake Huron, finally brought the ship back to Mackinac.

The *Nancy* arrived there with her rigging so badly cut up that further cruises that year were ruled out. Similarly, the garrison at Mackinac was in an imperiled situation. Since the British squadron on Lake Erie had been nullified, the Americans were free to roam the Upper Lakes at will. It seemed reasonable to expect that the enemy fleet would be hot on the heels of the *Nancy* with every intention of reclaiming Fort Michilimackinac and grabbing that important pressure point in the western fur trade.

The Americans did not immediately follow in the wake of the *Nancy*, however. The weather continued inclement enough to terminate the sailing season. Besides preparing for an attack that did not come, Bullock was left to scrounge for the supplies to keep his garrison fed through the tough winter ahead. Plans were made for a new supply route that would stretch from York overland to Georgian Bay, but with the lakes freezing up there would be no relief until spring.

Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry: "Don't give up the ship".

Despairing over the situation at Mackinac, Commander-in-Chief Sir George Prevost ordered an emergency relief mission to be undertaken at the earliest possible time. The job went to Lieutenant-Colonel Robert McDouall of the Glengarry Light Infantry. Late in February he led a force of shipwrights, seamen, artillerymen and two companies of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment across the ice of Lake Simcoe and overland to the headwaters of the Nottawasaga River. There they constructed thirty bateaux and proceeded down the river to its mouth on Georgian Bay, arriving there on 25 April. After a few days of preparation, McDouall's row-boat squadron, guided by Lieutenant Robert Livingstone, a British officer attached to the Indian Department, headed out into the ice-filled, wind-swept bay, the bateaux nearly gunwale-deep with supplies. On 18 May they arrived at Mackinac, having lost only one boat.

The immediate needs of the garrison at Fort Michilimackinac were met and the *Nancy* was soon dispatched to the mouth of the Nottawasaga for more supplies. In addition to the British detachment at Mackinac, large groups of Indians were gathering at the fort to take advantage of its protection. The supplies did not last long and July found McDouall pleading with Lieutenant-General Drummond, his commander, for help:

Top of page 44: The "Confiance" and the "Surprise".

Macpherson Collection

Perry's victory on Lake Erie, 10 September 1813. Perry's flagship was so badly battered by the British during the action that the American commander had to transfer to another ship.

> . . . . even my own garrison I am compelled to reduce the rations of, and as soldiers have but little foresight and think only of the present, it adds to the general discontent on the subject of provisions. In what a predicament does this leave me, and in what a situation should I be left if great efforts are not made for my relief? Every day adds to my perplexity on the subject. I now only issue 250 rations daily to the Indians which make the whole about 550. It is absolutely essential and cannot with prudence be otherwise, that in calculating the supplies for this garrison, at least three hundred Indians should be included, and I am fully convinced that they could never be expended to a better purpose. . .

McDouall's other main worry was soon to be realized. On 3 July an American flotilla under the command of Captain Arthur Sinclair left Detroit. Sinclair's flagship was the *Niagara*, an eighteen-gun brig, which was backed up by its sister-ship the *Lawrence* and several much more lightly armed schooners, all veterans of the Battle of Lake Erie. Along with the more than five hundred seamen on those ships, one thousand soldiers, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel George Croghan, had been embarked for the assault on Michilimackinac.

A lack of foresight complicated the Americans' mission, however. Intent on cutting the supply route to Mackinac first, they headed for Machedash Bay in Georgian Bay, which, their sources had told them, was the depot for the British overland route. Sinclair could not find Machedash, having been unable "to procure a pilot for that unfrequented part of the lake" and stymied by "the impenetrable fog with which the lake is almost constantly covered". He and Croghan changed plans and steered back westward toward Mackinac.

First, the squadron anchored off St. Joseph's Island intending to attack an outpost there. They found the fort abandoned, the British soldiers having been withdrawn to Mackinac, less than 80 kilometres away. The Americans burned the fortifications at St. Joseph's, but left the tiny settlement alone. Captain Sinclair and Colonel Croghan made good use of their time at St. Joseph's. They easily snatched up the *Mink*, a small fur-trader, which unsuspectingly happened upon the anchored squadron. Lieutenant Daniel Turner of the schooner USS *Scorpion* was ordered to proceed, with

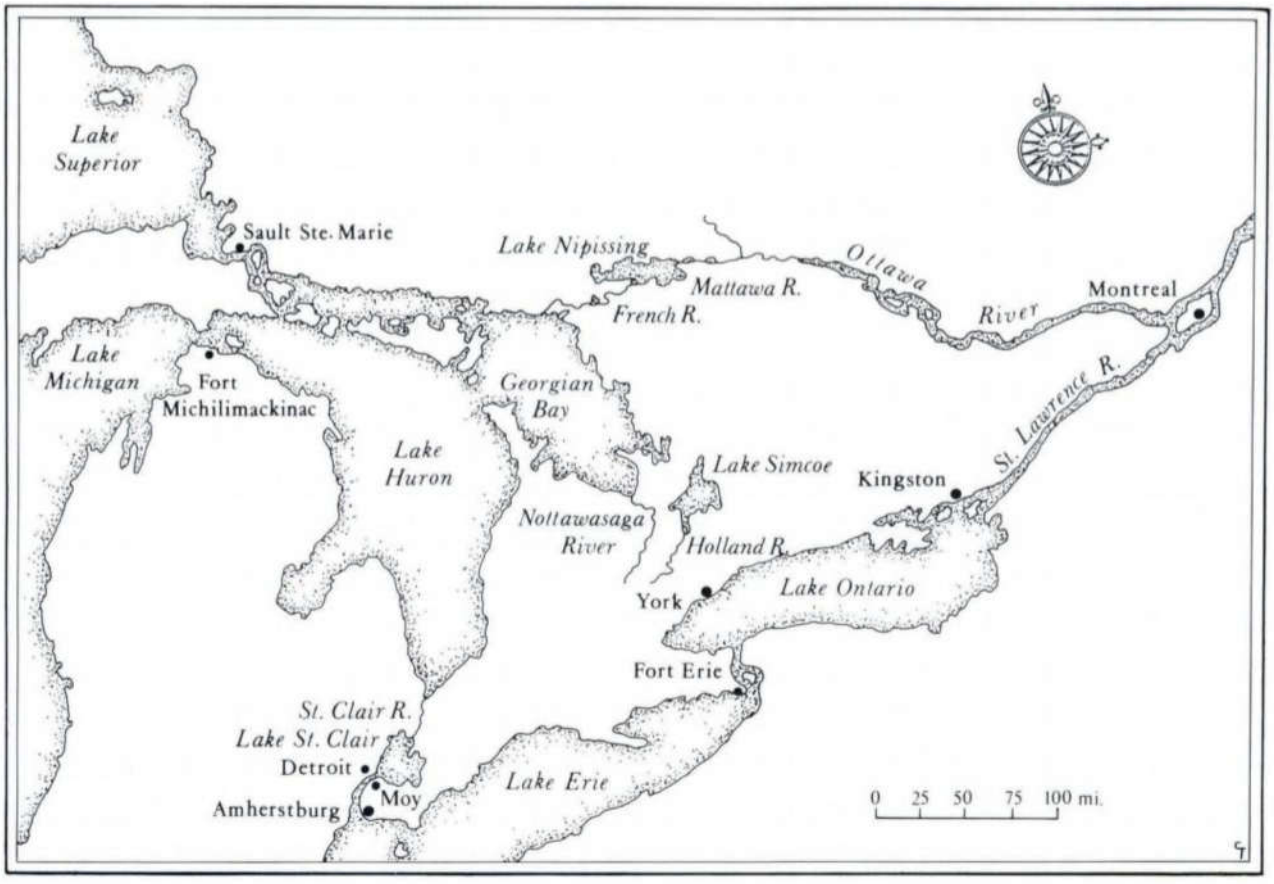
a group of open boats, to Sault Ste. Marie where one of the *Mink*'s crew had told the Americans that the Company's Lake Superior schooner *Perseverance* would soon be arriving. Turner and his men reached the Sault on 26 July, climbed around the falls and succeeded in taking the *Perseverance* with barely a scuffle. The local topography made it difficult to bring the schooner back to the squadron, although according to Turner's report his men made a good try of it:

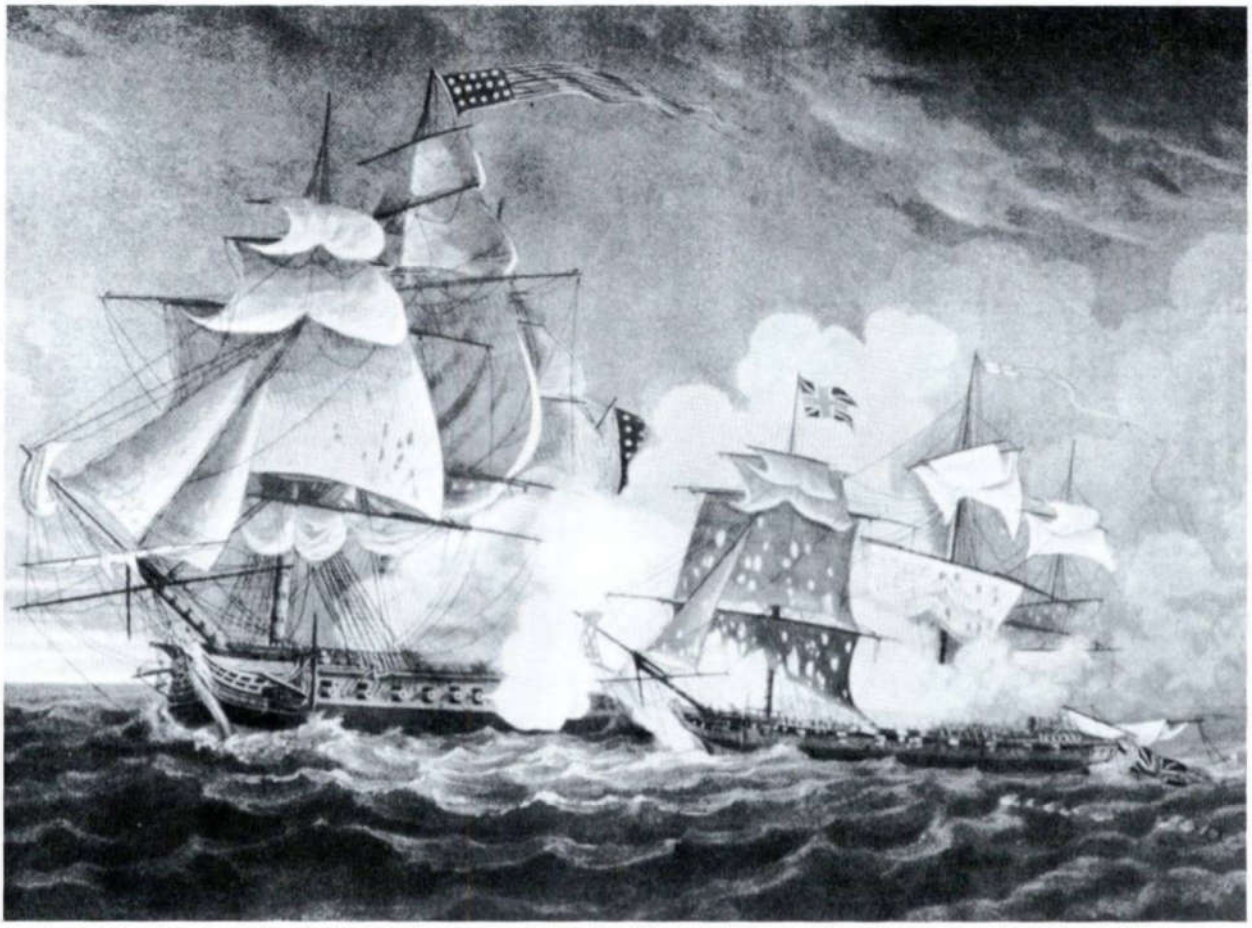
> The fall in three-quarters of a mile is forty-five feet and the channel very rocky, the current runs from twenty to thirty knots and in one place there is a perpendicular leap of ten feet between three rocks. Here she [*Perseverance*] bilged but was brought down so rapidly that we succeeded in running her on shore below the rapids before she filled and burned her. She was a fine new schooner . . . and will be a severe loss to the Northwest Company.

While Turner was busy at the Sault on the 26th, the American squadron made its appearance off Fort Michilimackinac. Sinclair and Croghan seemed to hold all the trump cards. One thousand troops were ready to make the assault on the fort supported on the lake by well armed warships. British Lieutenant McDouall defended his position with several dozen artillerymen and fewer than 150 foot soldiers. Several hundred Indians were present who might help in a pinch, but McDouall could not be sure of them. To support him on the lakes there remained one ship, the *Nancy*; McDouall quickly despatched Robert Livingstone to Georgian Bay by canoe with a warning for the schooner's master to stay put.

Again, the rugged and wild topography of the area frustrated the American plan. Fort Michilimackinac had been built on a rocky cliff that towered close to 40 metres over a narrow beach head. From that position a killing bombardment could be showered down upon any direct assault. The guns of the American ships could not be elevated steeply enough to provide a worthwhile covering fire. Sinclair and Croghan had no other option but to approach the garrison from the opposite side of the island. Here, too, nature served the British. A dense forest covered the three kilometres between the landing point and the fort.

On 4 August the Americans made their move. Sin-





Macpherson Collection

One of the incidents that led to the War of 1812-1814. The British sloop "Little Belt" is attacked by the U.S. frigate "President", 16 May 1811.

clair anchored the *Niagara* and *Lawrence* close inshore. A protective barrage was laid down by their broadsides while the other ships guided the landing force towards the beach. Upon landing, Croghan's men formed up their rank and file on the shore and marched towards the woods. Here they were split into two lines before trying to enter the forest. Once among the trees, however, they were mercilessly picked off by the musketry of McDouall troops and the Indians who had joined his defence. Immediately several of the American officers were killed. Others were horribly wounded and the attack ground to a halt. From the cover offered by the vegetation the British and Indian allies drove the Americans into a panic. Sinclair later explained that "the men were getting lost and falling into confusion, natural under such circumstances, which demanded an immediate retreat or a total defeat, and a massacre ensued."

With the failure of an armed assault the American commanders decided to be satisfied with a naval blockade of Mackinac. Sinclair hoped that the garrison could be slowly strangled into submission. The brig *Lawrence* and another ship were sent back to Lake Erie with the men wounded during the failed attack.

Sinclair and Croghan decided to make one final effort to further weaken the British. An informer on the *Mink* told them that the schooner *Nancy*, the last remaining link in the British supply circuit, was in Georgian Bay. If she could be captured, Mackinac would easily fall back into American hands. Within days of their defeat in the tangled woods of that island, Captain Sinclair and Croghan set sail in the *Niagara* and the schooners *Tigress* and *Scorpion* for Georgian Bay.

Their arrival in Georgian Bay had been preceded by that of Robert Livingstone. He had intercepted the *Nancy* just as she was leaving the bay with supplies for Michilimackinac. In command of the ship was Lieutenant Miller Worsley who had brought munitions and food from York during July. McDouall's urgent warning about the American squadron prompted Worsley to turn tail and steer for the mouth of the Nottawasaga River. There, the schooner was man-handled three kilometres up the narrow and shallow river. Worsley directed the building of a crude blockhouse,

in which the *Nancy*'s three cannons were mounted. Every effort was made to conceal the *Nancy* from the Americans. The difficulty of the task was compounded by the fact that the Nottawasaga River at that point paralleled the bay, only separated from it by a tree covered peninsula of sand.

Sinclair's squadron arrived off Nottawasaga on 13 August. A foraging party sent ashore soon came upon the *Nancy* and her British defenders and the fight began. An initial attempt at a naval bombardment was frustrated by the imposing sandhill so Croghan's men landed their own artillery. The result was a clear victory for the Americans, as the military commander reported:

> About 12 o'clock, two howitzers . . . being placed within a few hundred yards of the block-house, commenced a fire which lasted but a few minutes when the house blew up and at the same time communicated the fire to the *Nancy* which was quickly so enveloped in flames as to render any attempt which might have been made to save her unavailing. My first impression on seeing the explosion was that the enemy after having spiked his guns had set fire to the magazine himself, but on examination it was found to have been occasioned by the bursting of one of our shells which firing some combustible matter near the magazine gave the enemy but barely time to escape before the explosion took place. . . . The enemy will feel severely the loss of the Nancy, her cargo consisting (at the time of being set on fire) of several hundred barrels of provisions intended as a six months' supply for the garrison at Mackinac.

Content that his objective had been reached, Captain Sinclair sailed for Lake Erie in the *Niagara* leaving the *Scorpion* and *Tigress* under the command of Lieutenant Turner to blockade the Nottawasaga. By rights, the destruction of the *Nancy* should have been the end to the fight for control of Mackinac. Although Fort Michilimackinac was still in British hands, the Americans' combined naval and military expedition had, to all appearances, choked off its very lifeline. Sinclair and Croghan sailed home ready to report their successes. What they did not account for was the determination of a small band of seamen, Indians and voyageurs hidden in the woods near Nottawasaga.

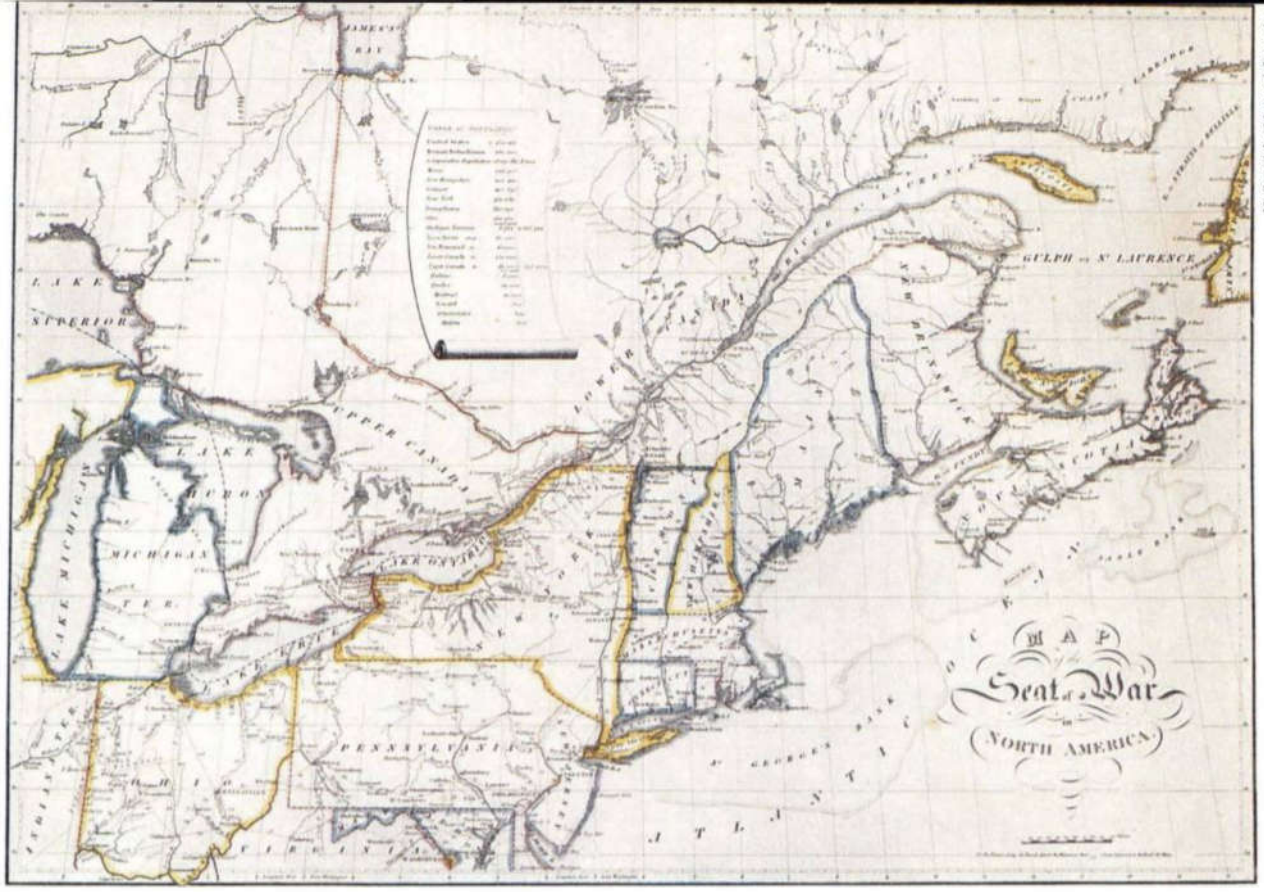
It is difficult to imagine the hardships of living for weeks on end in the wilds of Ontario during the early 1800s. Like countless iron men before them this feat was managed during the summer of 1814 by Lieutenant Miller Worsley of the Royal Navy, a score of sailors, a handful of voyageurs and various Indian allies. In the words of one member of the party, "we suffered every misery you can imagine from bad weather and mosquitoes, etc. etc. The land here is the most barren I have seen."

The schooner "Nancy" by C.H.J. Snider.

The American attack did not send Worsley scuttling back to York. Instead he buried the one British casualty, cared for the sailor whose arm had been splintered by an American shot and then amputated in the forest without a pause for sterile procedures (the man survived) and set about consolidating his command. While a spell of bad weather chased the *Tigress* and *Scorpion* away, Worsley's men cleared the river of debris, loaded two bateaux and Livingstone's canoe with barrels that had escaped the Americans' plunder and promptly set out for Mackinac during the night of 18 August.

In another of those incredible open boat expeditions, Worsley, assisted by Livingstone, navigated his way nearly five hundred kilometres across Georgian Bay and into Lake Huron, arriving at St. Joseph's six days later. Near that island he was startled to see, cruising placidly in the Detour, a narrow channel near the island, the schooners *Tigress* and *Scorpion*.

Knowing it was not possible to pass them undetected, Worsley back tracked and hid his heavily laden bateaux among the rocks and brush of a small inlet.



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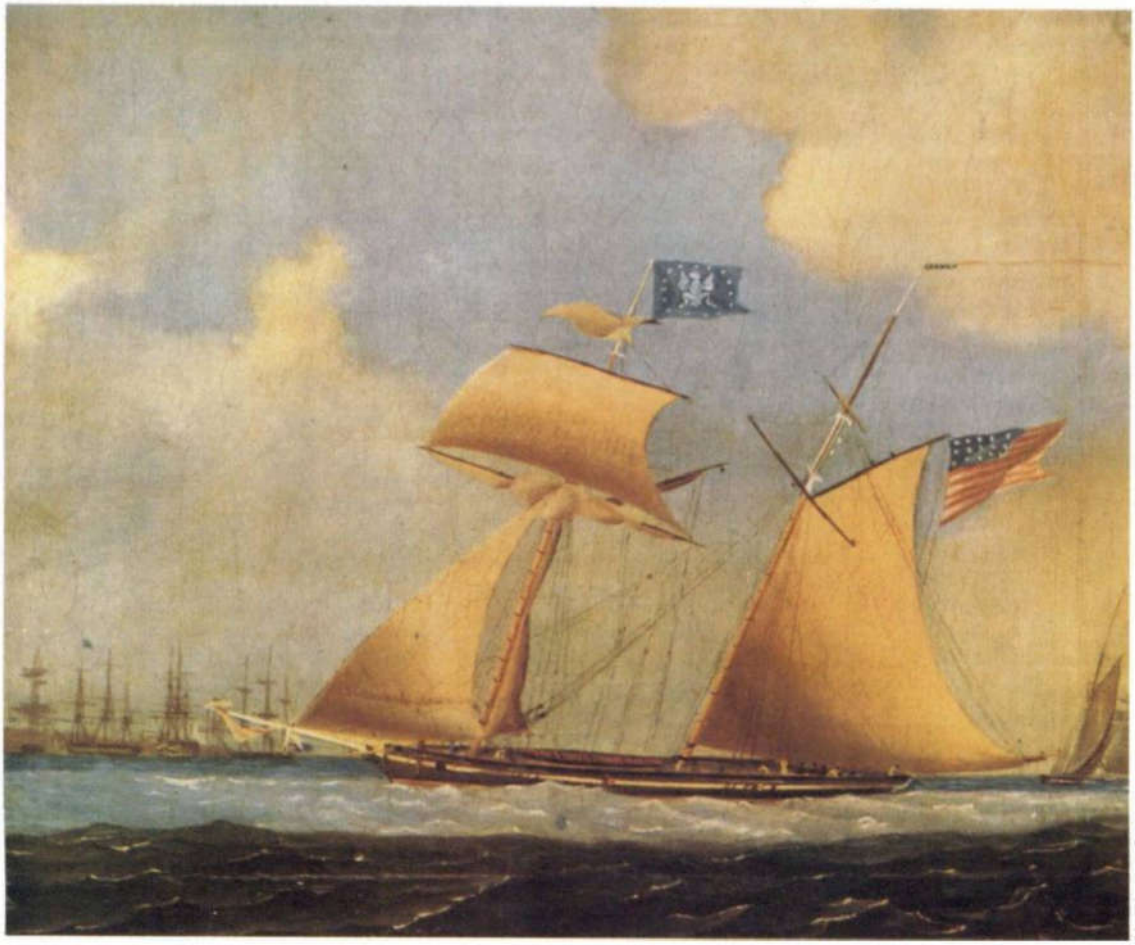
An American privateer of the 1812 War period, from an 1812 oil painting.



Macpherson Collection

Bob Malcomson photograph

Preparations are made to launch the restored "Niagara" at Erie Harbour, 10 September 1988.

Several days later, he packed the canoe full of 25 of his followers and sprinted for Mackinac, landing there on 30 August.

Quickly Miller Worsley reported to Lieutenant-Colonel McDouall and resolutely proposed an attack upon the American schooners, the last of the American squadron left on the lake. Granted permission to mount the endeavour, Worsley wasted no time. In command of four boats carrying his sailors and fifty men from the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and accompanied by Indians in canoes, he set out for the Detour on 1 September. He arrived there late the next day and found the *Tigress* lying alone and at anchor at mid channel. Leaving his boats concealed in a small bay, Worsley went out by canoe to reconnoiter the enemy's position the next day and made final plans for his attack.

After the sun had set on 3 September, the crew of the *Tigress* had settled into its night-time routine. A watch had been posted and the one cannon loaded while most of the 30-man crew turned in. Little did they suspect that their foe was silently sweeping across the water toward them. Lieutenant A. H. Bulger was one of the military officers in charge of one of the boats. With typical British understatement, he later wrote to McDouall:

> About 9 o'clock at night we discovered the enemy and had approached to within one hundred yards of them before they hailed us. On receiving no answer they opened a smart fire upon us, both of musketry and from the 24-pounder. All opposition, however, was in vain for in the course of five minutes the enemy's vessel was boarded and carried by Lieutenant Worsley and Lieutenant Armstrong on the starboardside, and by my boat and Lieutenant Radenhurst on the larboard. . . . The defence of this vessel did credit to her officers who were all severely wounded. She had three men wounded and three missing, supposed to have been killed and thrown immediately overboard. Our loss is two seamen killed and seven soldiers and seamen slightly wounded.

With the *Tigress* under control, Worsley sent the prisoners away under guard and dispatched Robert Livingstone to reconnoiter the other American schooner. She was spotted some distance away, so Lieutenant Worsley decided to sit tight and wait for the *Scorpion* to arrive. On 5 September the schooner sailed within sight and anchored three kilometres away from the *Tigress* without suspicion that, beneath the stars and stripes still fluttering in her rigging, a band of British sailors and soldiers lay hidden below deck.

As Lieutenant Turner's crew swabbed the decks of the *Scorpion* at dawn on the 6th, the *Tigress* was seen to set her jib and foresail and drift laconically towards them. Instead of a friendly salute, however, the *Tigress* abruptly turned tyrant as she ran alongside, fired her single gun and swarmed with a screaming hoard of redcoats. The battle was short, but furious. Retribution was the spirit that turned Alexander McIntosh, former captain of the *Nancy*, into a bloodthirsty warrior. As

an American sailor rushed to load a cannon, McIntosh "cut off his head with a sword, the former falling overboard. The Captain seized the body, and pitched it over also, saying, as he did so, 'Follow your head'."

Before Captain Sinclair reached his home port on Lake Erie, the entire purpose of his expedition to Mackinac had been undone. Thanks to the determination of men like McDouall, Livingstone, Worsley and their followers, the post at Michilimackinac was preserved, its supply line protected and the loss of the *Nancy* revenged. No further American forces threatened the area again since a faltering invasion at Fort Erie was taking up all their resources. Before the year was out the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Ghent.

A series of epilogues from the story of the struggle for Mackinac and the destruction of the *Nancy* have stretched over the years. Within months the whole purpose of the conflict was reversed as the terms of the Ghent Treaty peacefully handed Mackinac back to the Americans. The British withdrew to a base at nearby Drummond Island.

Captain Arthur Sinclair was mortified when he heard that the *Scorpion* and *Tigress* had been lost. He openly blamed Lieutenant Daniel Turner for ineptitude. "I herewith enclose you my instructions for Lieutenant Turner," he wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, ". . . I cannot express my chagrin at the little regard which appears to have been paid to them." In a subsequent court martial, Turner was absolved of blame.

Turner's lost command, the *Scorpion* and *Tigress*, remained in the possession of the British and were renamed *Surprise* and *Confiance*, respectively. The Royal Navy paid more than 2,000 English pounds as "prize" money to Worsley and the other men involved in their capture. For years the ships were posted at the Naval Establishment at Penetanguishene, and cruised the Upper Lakes on a variety of missions. In 1928 a hulk was located in the bay at Penetanguishene, raised and put on display there. Unsupervised souvenir hunters soon reduced the wreck to a shambles, but not before it had been identified as the remains of HMS *Confiance*, formerly the *Tigress*. A more recent review of the final years of the captured schooners suggests that the wooden debris at Penetang has been misnamed. In 1972, Elsie McLeod Jury, director of research at the restored Naval Establishment, showed that British Admiralty records attached the *Confiance* and *Surprise* to a base on Lake Erie at the mouth of the Grand River in the 1830s when they disappeared. The remains of the little schooners may still be awaiting discovery beneath the waters of the lake where American builders had originally launched them.

The eventual fate of the *Nancy* is more precisely known. The ship's owners were paid close to £4,000

Mackinac Island and the fort.

for the war-services rendered by the *Nancy* and as compensation for her loss, but the ship herself was forgotten. Her charred timbers settled beneath the waters of the Nottawasaga River and, over the years, a sandbar formed around the wreck. C. H. J. Snider, a journalist and historian, was responsible for the rediscovery of the schooner. In 1911 he located the site of the *Nancy* and began to arouse interest in her story. Seventeen years later the *Nancy* came to light again. The bottom portion of the hull was retrieved from the river and on 14 August 1928, 114 years after the ship's demise, the first Nancy Museum was dedicated on Nancy Island. In 1968 a new complex, the Museum of the Upper Lakes, was constructed where the hulk and artifacts from the period may be viewed.

Another ship from the episode has survived the erosions of time. Captain Sinclair's flagship, the *Niagara*, ended her active service by being scuttled in Misery Bay at Erie, Pennsylvania. The brig was refloated and reconstructed, using some of the original timbers, for a centennial celebration in 1913 of the Battle of Lake Erie. The *Niagara* was towed around ports in the Upper Lakes that year and then returned to Erie where she spent the next decades alternately sinking and being raised. In time the *Niagara* was placed on cement cradles in a shoreside park. Recently, the state of Pennsylvania adopted the ship as its official tall ship and a fresh rebuilding project (once more using wood from the original ship) was undertaken. On 10 September 1988, the 175th anniversary of the battle, the reborn *Niagara* was gently lowered into the waters of Erie Harbour. The *Niagara* will be refitted for sea. Unaided by twentieth-century mechanics, the two-masted brig will once again cruise the Great Lakes. Undoubtedly, she will pass the lonely post of Michilimackinac. Perhaps her course will be set to visit the shoreline near the Nottawasaga River where the bones of her long ago adversary, and the memories of their fiery encounter, are proudly on display. ♦

Bob Malcomson is a school teacher and freelance writer who lives in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Onward and Upward

By Anne Morton

ISHBEL AND THE EMPIRE
A Biography of Lady Aberdeen
By Doris French. Dundurn Press, Toronto and Oxford, 1988. 346 pp., illus. $26.95 cloth; $16.95 paper.

Lady Aberdeen was a powerful woman. Born in 1857, the daughter of a wealthy Scottish brewer (the WCTU was never to be one of her causes), Ishbel Marjoribanks endured a childhood made wretched by the tensions in her parents' marriage and the realization that her large body and exuberant personality were at odds with conventional ideals of childhood and womanhood. She emerged, however, with her exuberance unquenched and firm Christian and Liberal convictions. Ishbel wanted not just to be good but to do good. With Ethel May, the heroine of Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Daisy Chain,* first published the year before Ishbel's birth, she might have looked at her life before her and said: "My course and aim are straight on, and He will direct my paths. . . . Some one there must be to be loved and helped, and the poor for certain."

Ishbel met the seventh Earl of Aberdeen in 1870 and got him to the altar of St. George's, Hanover Square seven years later. With Ishbel as his wife, Lord Aberdeen, who might otherwise have lapsed into kindly eccentricity, was given direction and impetus, and with Lord Aberdeen as her husband Ishbel was given an Imperial stage on which to fulfil her ambitions. Beginning as they meant to go on, the Aberdeens adopted four Sudanese slave boys on their Egyptian honeymoon and

National Archives of Canada

Lord and Lady Aberdeen.

kept up the good work at their Scottish home, notably with the Onward and Upward Association for women servants (". . . the opposite of Backward and Downward," Lady Aberdeen once explained).

It was to be in Ireland and Canada that the Aberdeens really made their mark. Lord Aberdeen was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1886 and again from 1906 to 1914. The service the Aberdeens, devout Home Rulers both, gave to Ireland, exceeded and outlasted Lord Aberdeen's terms of office. They worked to promote Irish industry and to provide health care to Ireland's poor to the extent of impoverishing themselves (although, like most people born wealthy they had the happy knack of living rich even when they weren't.)

Lord Aberdeen served as Governor-General of Canada from 1893 to 1898. Here too the Aberdeens were social activists. On the assumption that *The Beaver* makes its way onto a coffee table in Rideau Hall, the new incumbent might like to know that Lord Aberdeen saw activism as perfectly proper for the Governor-General. He believed that "because your Governor-General is in the service of the Crown, he is, therefore, also in a literal and absolute sense, in the service of Canada." The Governor-General should be ready "to promote . . . every movement and every institution calculated to forward the social, moral, and religious welfare of all the inhabitants of the Dominion." (And that, Your Excellency, is better advice than the *Globe & Mail* will ever give you.)

Lady Aberdeen did not just promote worthwhile activities. She was a tireless initiator. Today, the best known institution founded by her is probably the Victorian Order of Nurses which she established in the teeth of fierce opposition from the Canadian medical profession — as one is curiously unsurprised to learn. But the VON was only one among many. There was, for example, the Aberdeen Association for the Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the North-West, an attempt to relieve the cultural bleakness of prairie life. As Doris French, the author of this affectionate and sassy tribute to Lady Aberdeen, is a native

of Saskatchewan, it is good to think that the wild North-West has paid Lady Aberdeen some of the debt it owes her.

The biography is not without faults. Many of them are probably to be attributed to proofreaders and copy editors either remarkably slap-happy or, more likely, entirely absent from the process of book production. I hate to complain, I admit that my obsession with correct spelling, particularly of proper names, was bestowed on me at the font and is not shared in equal measure by all readers, but if we do not complain we are going to get more and more carelessly made books. It should also be pointed out that, for example, the wife of Sir James Edgar was Lady Edgar, not Lady Matilda Edgar. We may hear every day about that non-existent personage, Princess Diana, but a mistake about titles, however usual, should not have been allowed in a book about the wife of an aristocrat.

What Doris French does get triumphantly right is the main duty of a biographer. French has been the biographer of Agnes Macphail and Tommy Douglas — she specializes, that is, in those who would rather light a candle than curse the darkness — and she was seventy when this book was published. She knows what people she values and why she values them and she can make her readers share her love and admiration. You finish this book with a gladsome mind, happy to know Lady Aberdeen and feeling better about Canada because this wonderful woman is part of our heritage. You can ask for other things in a life of Lady Aberdeen than French gives you but you cannot ask for more.

French's approach is all the more refreshing when compared to what you will read about Lady Aberdeen in many Canadian histories. Here you will learn that she was a bossy boots who wore the kilt in the Aberdeen family. One historian even compares her to Anthony Trollope's Mrs. Proudie, which is not only inaccurate but even more of an insult to Lord Aberdeen than to his wife. In fairness, it must be said that not all historians treat Lady Aberdeen in this way, notably John Saywell, who even in the repressive atmosphere of his introduction to the Champlain Society edition of her Canadian journals, manages to come across as a devoted fan. It must be said too that there is good reason for historians to consider how much influence Lady Aberdeen had on her husband. Lord Aberdeen was Governor-General at a time when the chief faults in Canada's character, brought to vigorous and horrid life by the Manitoba Schools Question, joyfully galumphed about the national stage. It was both a symptom and to some extent a cause of these trying times that there were four prime ministers during Aberdeen's five-year tenure of office. And the question is, when Sir John Thompson dropped dead in the middle of luncheon at Windsor Castle, did Ishbel improperly influence her husband in his choice of the new prime minister? Everyone knew that the Aberdeens were Liberal (when Ishbel moved into Rideau Hall she hung a portrait of her beloved Gladstone in every room) but would she have been so partisan as to urge her husband to appoint Mackenzie Bowell on the grounds that he would be such a disaster as to hasten the happy day when Laurier and the Liberals would be ushered into power?

Yes, according to French. I cannot go all the way with her on this but her picture of Lady Aberdeen and her thoughts as she spent the early hours of New Year's Day, 1895, stitching the fringe onto Sir John's funeral pall, has a certain charm. "As she stitched," French asks, "was she planning the burial of Thompson's party along with the corpse?" If these were indeed her emotions at the time, Lady Aberdeen certainly gives no inkling of

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them in her journal. While one wonders what French would have made of it if Sir John had answered the heavenly division bell while lunching at Rideau Hall, the way French glories in Lady Aberdeen's power, both of position and personality, comes as a tonic.

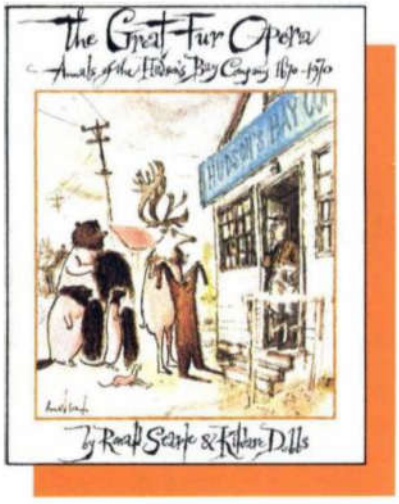
Refreshing too is French's attitude to Lady Aberdeen's sexuality. Again, I cannot go as far as French in assuming that Henry Drummond, the Aberdeens' spiritual mentor, was Ishbel's lover and the father of her third son, Archie. We do know that both the Aberdeens loved Drummond and that he had a profound effect on their religiosity, loosening them up so that they were not "the prim goody couple", in Lady Aberdeen's phrase, of their early married years. (One result of Drummond's influence was that Ishbel battled to have sessions of the National Council of Women begin with silent prayer, so that women of all religions and denominations could feel full participants. It was not, oh Canada, one of her more popular ideas.) We do know that there was something about her relationship with Drummond which Ishbel wanted to keep a secret. And she did keep it secret, so that now she cannot be enrolled in the list of adulterous wives of Canadian Governors-General. To the best of my knowledge, it is a short list of one, occupied only by Princess Louise. And anyone who has read that genteel biography of Louise, which skirts the whole issue of her sexuality, not to mention that of her husband, can only applaud French's sane and sympathetic approach, completely lacking in gee-whizzery.

This book was many years in the making and throughout French shares with us a sense of her pilgrimage in search of Lady Aberdeen, trotting through Dublin Castle guide-book in hand (though it is a pity she does not mention those eye-popping carpets which would surely make Ishbel, champion of Irish textiles that she was, beam with pride), opening an envelope labelled "Henry" and finding "a curled lock of reddish brown silky hair that springs from the thread that ties it in a rather unnerving way", clicking her camera outside Ishbel's homes. The numerous photographs, both French's and from various archival sources, are one of the best features of the book, as they are not stuck in a wodge in the middle but spread throughout so that they interact with the text for maximum effect.

We feel that we travel with French as she got to know and love Lady Aberdeen and this is one of the ways that the book gives us Lady Aberdeen as a living woman. Do read it. Ishbel was quite a gal and Canadians should get to know her.

Anne Morton is an archivist with the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

The Great Fur Opera



– the hilarious spoof of the history of the Hudson's Bay Company written by Kildare Dobbs with illustrations by Ronald Searle – has become a Canadian comedy classic since it was published in 1970, the Honourable Company's 300th anniversary year. **The Beaver** is now offering a limited number of a special presentation edition at the low price of $19.98 (postage paid) while supplies last. For your copy of

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Running the CPR

By Jeffrey Anderson

LORDS OF THE LINE
The Men Who Built the CPR

By David Cruise and Alison Griffiths. Viking-Penguin, Markham, Ont., 1989. 486 pp., illus. $25.00 cloth; $6.95 paper.

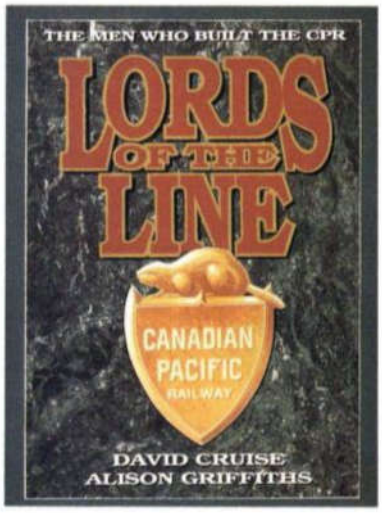
The on-again-off-again love affair Canadians have with the railways runs deep in both directions. In several respects the railways were the making of Canada: they brought provinces into Confederation, ferried troops to battle, (the first occasion was to put down the North West Rebellion), and conveyed settlers to populate the West. Their early scandals even toppled governments.

Actually, the first true railway system was created to serve prosperous Montreal merchants who needed advanced transportation for their goods from that city to Lake Champlain in the south. This was achieved in 1836 with the opening of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad.

It was not until 1885 that the Canadian Pacific completed, seriously underestimating the costs, the arduous and forbidding task of forging the continental link, thus fulfilling the promise of Confederation. It connected the western segments of the country with central Canada and more especially British Columbia with the rest of the country.

Lords of the Line is the intriguing story of six men who left their personal stamp on the CPR from early times to the present. Their foresight, determination and often questionable policies gave rise to one of this country's greatest institutions and helped shape a nation.

It was a tremendous accomplishment, but in contrast to the "last spike" celebrations in the U.S. marking the completion of the American transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Canadian equivalent was by comparison a subdued affair with Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona) needing more than one attempt at driving an ordinary spike



(unlike the gold and silver ones used in the U.S.) into a railroad tie at Craigellachie, B.C.

The famous photograph of Smith standing in the wilderness incongruously dressed in top hat and frock coat, peering apprehensively into the camera surrounded by construction workers, is duly reproduced, along with many other evocative period photos that enhance the narrative.

The saga of the CPR, the imperial link that transformed an emerging nation is well told elsewhere. What sets this excellent book apart is the focus it brings to interlinked portraits of six of the prime movers in the company, each of whom played a crucial role in the formation and running of the railroad. And a rum lot they were, one might say about these "Lords of the Line". Their chicanery, unabashed use of bribery and shrewd political manipulation is a principal theme and well documented. In retrospect, they were possibly no worse, in their questionable practices, than many of the high flying financiers of today.

Among the more attractive is Sir William Van Horne, a man of immense energy and drive who pushed through the completion of the railway almost single-handedly, undeterred by seemingly impossible odds.

One of the least appealing is surely Sir Edward Beatty, who ran the CPR for a quarter of a century (1918-1942) with virtually absolute power, as if it were entirely his own creation. Sir Edward waged a vitriolic campaign against his rival Sir Henry Thornton, the capable and far seeing president of the CNR. Beatty was instrumental in heaping odium on Thornton and was doubtless the main agent of his eventual downfall. What sparked his animosity was Thornton's initiative in introducing radio cars on the CNR in the early twenties. The idea was not only to entertain passengers but also to have Thornton in constant contact with his employees. The CNR eventually established three owned-and-operated radio stations and, by using leased time from privately owned stations, a trans-Canada radio network was formed, a precursor of the CBC. The success of the venture incurred the jealous wrath of Beatty and the CPR.

The profiles end with a candid assessment of Ian Sinclair, one of the most powerful of the tough-minded — the company first and

always — presidents. Like Beatty before him, Sinclair ruled the CPR as if it were a private fiefdom. He was famous for his quip "I don't get heart attacks — I give them". Hardly an expression that would endear him to his colleagues or promote the kind of personal loyalty that Sir Henry Thornton achieved with the staff of the CNR.

The CPR was run consistently by outstanding self-possessed, aggressive men who developed the transportation giant into the country's largest Canadian-owned company. But their frequently ruthless and uncaring policies and their often poor corporate image failed to erase the widely heard expletive ("Goddamn the CPR") which became a kind of national curse.

Lords of the Line is an absorbing book, brimming with insights, some speculation and many anecdotes concerning the six principals, George Stephen, William Van Horne, Thomas Shaughnessy, Edward Beatty, Buck Crump and Ian Sinclair.

Jeffrey Anderson recently retired from the faculty of the University of Western Ontario.

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In Beaver Country

By Barry Gough

THE ENGLISH RIVER BOOK
A North West Company Journal and Account Book of 1786

Edited by Harry W. Duckworth. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1990. (Rupert's Land Record Society series). 256 pp. $32.95.

The river itself has been known by several names: "English", because the English fur traders ascended it to trade with the Indians, "Beaver", because of the numerous beaver on it at one time, "Missinipi", great water, the native name; and now Churchill River, after John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough and sometime Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. The upper reaches of this river provided the avenue of commerce and communications from The Pas to Île-à-la Crosse. Farther to the northwest and over the Portage la Loche, otherwise Methye Portage, lay the Clearwater and Athabasca rivers draining Lake Athabasca, Slave River, Great Slave and ultimately the Mackenzie and Arctic. This book is not about the English River itself, but about the pioneering trade in the southern reaches of the Athabasca country.

Eight years before this journal and account book were written the legendary Peter Pond had pushed through into this hitherto unexploited beaver realm, and, like Radisson and Groseilliers in lands to the east, had found himself a Caesar of the Wilderness, virtually unopposed. But Pond left no substantial account and his maps are enigmatic; indeed his furtiveness is his compelling attraction. The manuscript here published for the first time (though the editor strangely refers to the manuscript as "the original edition") was probably kept by Cuthbert Grant the elder, later a North West Company partner, and a prominent force in the concern's development. Grant was second in command to Pond, and kept a matter-of-fact, very compressed account. Careful study will yield results: on 4 April Grant reports that Pond cut a Beaver Indian on the head with his dagger for pestering him and threatening him, but that Pond later gave him a blanket and some ammunition to appease him, perhaps as the editor suggests to keep the native from going to a rival trader. The editor does not have a lot of internal evidence in the manuscript to help him: many of the entries are fragmentary and poorly written, and in his editorial apparatus he has attempted to overcome these deficiencies. Many readers will find the footnotes quite useless, hidden as they are somewhere in the back of the book and not at the bottom of the page where they so desperately belong. The journal itself runs to a scant eleven pages in print, and the accounts to just over a hundred. There is a twenty-word Cree vocabulary. To this is appended an extensive apparatus: an appendix on Indian names found in the English River Book, and a collection of biographies of voyageurs and traders. Notes, bibliography and index complete the work.

Barry Gough is Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.

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From Dieppe's Killing Ground To Far Distant Battlefields

By Robert Saunders

THE TIMES ATLAS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Edited by John Keegan. Harper and Row, New York, 1989. 254 pp., illus. $50.00.

UNAUTHORIZED ACTION
Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid

By Brian Loring Villa. Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1989. 314 pp., illus. $24.95.

In 1946 when C.P. Stacey was writing the first of his books on the Canadian Army in World War II, he was advised by a senior official in the Department of Defence to finish his task as quickly as possible because by about 1948 the Canadian public would have lost all interest in the war.

Seldom has a forecast been so wrong. Nearly half a century later, books on the war are still pouring from the presses. In recent years, though, the emphasis in these books has been shifting. It was natural that earlier accounts in English-speaking countries should concentrate on those areas where British or Dominion troops were mainly involved and this trend was reinforced by Winston Churchill's eloquent and magisterial but highly selective narrative. Now, however, historians are coming to grips with the fact that World War II, (unlike the 1914 war) was truly global and, in this broader perspective, the crucial campaigns are seen to be those in which the Soviet Union repulsed the German invaders and those in which the United States regained mastery of the Pacific Ocean.

This more comprehensive view is reflected in *The Times Atlas of the Second World War.* As its editor, John Keegan, writes in his introduction:

> The war sent Brazilians to campaign in Italy, Indian subjects of the British King-Emperor to fight under British colours in North Africa and Europe and under Japanese colours in Burma, German soldiers who had been Austrians before 1938 to invade Crete, Australians to fight Frenchmen in Syria, Polish fighter pilots to defend London in the Battle of Britain, Belgians to die in Nazi uniform in the Battle of Berlin, Russian Cossacks to defend the beaches of Normandy against Americans and Maoris from New Zealand to attack Italians in Libya.

This is a handsome volume with large, coloured maps supplemented by a clear and authoritative text and a meticulously thorough index. The impressive array of distinguished military historians that Mr. Keegan has assembled for this project is warrant enough for the soundness of the scholarship.

However, as Michael Carver pointed out in a recent article in *The Times Literary Supplement,* all maps depicting complex military operations suffer from an inherent weakness. It is difficult in a static display such as a map to portray a dynamic, constantly-changing situation. The only solution is to pile on more detail but the greater the detail the less comprehensible the map becomes.

This said, it must be emphasized that these maps are highly sophisticated and extremely well done and that this atlas will, from now on, be an indispensable reference book for students of World War II.

At the end of the atlas there are brief biographies of some of the principal figures in the war. These are terse and generally straightforward but occasionally the compiler enlivens his account with a dash of malice. Thus we are told, for instance, of General Patton's "mindless brutality" and that the British air commander, Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory "aroused much animosity" while the First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound, "worked so continuously that his judgement is thought to have been impaired". It should be said that, in every case, such adverse comments are balanced by an appreciation of more sterling and praiseworthy qualities.

General Harry Crerar is about the only Canadian mentioned in these biographical sketches. General Andrew McNaughton is not included nor is Mackenzie King, although the prime ministers of

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South Africa, Australia and New Zealand are noted. Indeed, Canadians generally are largely neglected in this atlas. They are mentioned only in passing in the text relating to the campaigns in northern Europe after D-Day and there is no indication, either in the maps or the text, that any but British troops were involved in the fighting that led to the surrender of Hong Kong in December 1941. The ill-fated Dieppe raid (or "reconnaissance in force") of August 1942, does, however, get a map to itself.

The Dieppe raid is the subject of *Unauthorized Action* by Brian Loring Villa. It might seem that by now nothing more could be said about that blood-drenched folly but Mr. Villa, a history professor at the University of Ottawa, has come up with a new and startling version of events.

It will be recalled that the idea of an assault on Dieppe was first conceived early in April of 1942 at Combined Operations Headquarters, then headed by Lord Louis Mountbatten. On 13 May the chiefs of staff approved a plan — known as Operation Rutter — for a frontal attack on the town and port, supported by landings on the flanks. The troops were embarked on 2 and 3 July and the raid was to take place on 4 July or one of the following days. In accordance with the usual procedure in operations of this kind, the troops were "sealed" in their ships — that is, they were allowed no communication with the shore — and then they were fully briefed on the details of the operation. The weather on 4 July proved unsuitable for the attack and it remained so until 8 July, after which date moon and tide conditions made the raid too dangerous to undertake that month. The troops were therefore disembarked and they dispersed to their camps and billets.

That should have been the end of the matter. The idea of a frontal attack on a heavily-fortified port had been a pretty harebrained scheme to begin with and after 8 July any chance of surprise had been lost. Yet, despite this, Operation Rutter was remounted, this time code-named Operation Jubilee, and the raid went ahead with the tragic results we know. Why was this incredible piece of folly approved by the chiefs of staff, all of whom were experienced professionals? Mr. Villa's surprising answer is that such approval was never formally given but Lord Mountbatten, greedy for fame and glory, bulled ahead with Operation Jubilee anyway. The chiefs of staff, for various discreditable reasons of their own, weakly acquiesced.

Lord Louis Mountbatten gives a pep talk before the Dieppe Raid. From "Unauthorized Action".

It is a damning indictment and, if Mr. Villa is right, no British leader, from Winston Churchill down, emerges with much honour. Mr. Villa is aware that he is playing with weak cards. He cannot base his case on documentary evidence, but must argue instead from the absence of such documents. His case is that because there is nothing to show that the chiefs of staff authorized Operation Jubilee, therefore no authorization was ever given. It is very much to Mr. Villa's credit that he plays his cards so skillfully and makes out such a convincing case. Any future historian of Dieppe will have to grapple with Mr. Villa's arguments.

Mr. Villa devotes a lengthy appendix to describing his method of conducting research for his book and the layman thus gets a fascinating glimpse of the historian at work. Mr. Villa pays tribute to his two mentors at Harvard: the late William L. Langer and Ernest R. May. He speaks of Langer's ability to "pull startling revelations out of the most mundane-appearing documents" and of the way that May stressed that historical thinking must be imaginative and creative and "about ways of assembling fragments of analysis and about how each piece fitted into a larger conceptual whole". The beneficial influences of both these fine historians can be traced in Mr. Villa's disturbing but absorbing book.

Robert Saunders recently retired from the editorial pages of the "Winnipeg Free Press".

THE BEAVER
Seventy Years
of History

Toronto: The Victorian City

By Robert Saunders

A CITY IN THE MAKING
Progress, People and Perils in Victorian Toronto

By Frederick H. Armstrong. Dundurn Press, Toronto and Oxford, 1988. 358 pp., illus. $24.95.

It often used to be said that Canadian history lacks colourful, flamboyant heroes. We hear that complaint less often now which may be a sign of growing maturity or may only indicate a declining interest in history itself. Every now and then, though, the old lament is sounded once more. It is said that either Canada breeds only pale and bland nonentities or else timid historians are too prissy or too hidebound to reveal the true nature of the men and women they write about.

At one time the search for heroes tended to favour valiant battlefield commanders. Wolfe the dauntless and gallant Brock at Queenston Heights were extolled. However, as memories of bygone wars faded and as the links with Britain grew slighter these heroes lost much of their former lustre. Currie and Crerar never even remotely stirred the popular imagination.

We have turned from the soldiers to the rebels. Riel and Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie are our new demigods. The fact that all three led unsuccessful rebellions seems to endow them with a special glamour. They lost their battles but they fought on the right side, so we are told, and the ultimate victory of the good cause (whatever that may be) was due to them.

Mackenzie has for some years been the special favourite. He it was, we more or less gathered when we were at school, who led the Reformers in Ontario against the oligarchical Family Compact. He defied them and, although persecuted, he fought back. We all knew about that march on Toronto from the sonorously-named Montgomery's Tavern. It provided a brief but welcome flurry of excitement in the otherwise plodding pilgrimage toward Responsible Government, Confederation and — at the end of the journey — Dominion Status.

Now Frederick H. Armstrong, a member of the history department at the University of Western Ontario, has drawn his sword in defence of the maligned Family Compact. His onslaught on the myths that have surrounded Mackenzie are no less deadly for being judicious and reasoned and buttressed by sound scholarship. For the general reader, if not for his fellow historians, what Mr. Armstrong has to say amounts to a major revision of accepted history.

Strangely enough, after Mackenzie has been, as it were, cut down to size he emerges as, in some ways, a more attractive because more human figure. If nothing else, he was — like Stevenson's Alan Breck — a bonny fighter.

Mr. Armstrong's verdict on Mackenzie appears in *A City in the Making*, a series of articles — many of which are reprinted from various learned periodicals — dealing with some aspects of the history of Toronto in the last century.

It is quite wrong, Mr. Armstrong points out, to regard Mackenzie as in any way the leader of the Reformers. It was too loosely organized a group to have any leader at all. It is only partially correct to say that he was persecuted by the Family Compact. Most of whatever he suffered at their hands he brought on his own head. It is ludicrous to imagine that he was an exemplary administrator. His brief career as mayor of Toronto was a disaster. Above all, it is a distortion of history to view the rebellion he led in 1837 as a necessary step along the path to responsible government. Responsible government was already on the way to being achieved before 1837 and the greatest help that Mackenzie gave to that cause was leaving Canada and letting Robert Baldwin and the others get on with the job.

He was not a liberal in any sense that we could recognize today. He was, as Mr. Armstrong says, a typical merchant-proprietor of his era who, for all his talk of improving the lot of workers and farmers, resisted strikes in his own shop and was ruthless in his collection of debts. He had little love for minorities and Jews and blacks he viewed with special contempt. His accomplishments as a social reformer were far inferior to the work done by such

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What he was, says Mr. Armstrong, was a first-class journalist in the slashing, no-holds-barred style of that era. He was a populist who gave expression to the grievances of the Ontario rural communities in trenchant, compelling prose. Much of what he wrote is still great fun to read today even though the issues and personalities involved belong to a great-grandfather's time.

A good example of Mackenzie at his rambunctious best (or worst) is his diatribe against Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Bond Head who was a well-known author. Mackenzie's article began by complimenting the governor on his keen eye for the girls and went on to discuss a comment on a pretty Liverpool waitress which had appeared in one of Head's works. "Her stays," Sir Francis had written, "were tightly laced". This seems innocent enough but it enabled Mackenzie to leap to the attack in fine form:

"Now may it please Your Excellency, how could Your Excellency find out whether this languishing flirt's stays were tight laced or slack laced, or whether she actually wore stays, without having some passage with her of a nature too close for your history of her beauty to mention? Only to think of the old gentleman fumbling about the waiting maid's clothes to ascertain how strait her stays were laced."

Obviously, as Mr. Armstrong remarks, the press was far more free than Mackenzie would have had his readers believe.

Nearly 40 years ago Mr. Armstrong was a pioneer in the now-flourishing field of Canadian urban history and he has recently edited a new edition of Henry Scadding's classic *Toronto of Old*. He is pre-eminently the historian of nineteenth-century Toronto. *A City in the Making* includes a section on the physical landscape of Toronto as it grew from a village in the 1790s to a town of more than 10,000 people in the 1830s. Mr. Armstrong examines economic ventures such as the first attempt at railway building and he points out that such ventures reflected a commitment to progress that was remaking the face of every town, village and hamlet across both Europe and North America. "Toronto," he writes, "provides a local microcosm of an international phenomenon."

Other chapters examine some of the types of people who lived and worked in Toronto during its first century. Toronto was often regarded in those days as an Anglo-Saxon bastion with a largely homogeneous population, but Mr. Armstrong's "types" range from the Carfrae family — representative of the so-called "Scotch clique" — to Toronto's black community, composed not of the well-connected but of refugees from slavery.

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A final section deals with the two fires — the first in 1849 and the second in 1904 — that caused extensive damage in downtown Toronto. Disastrous though both were, they did lead to the construction of new buildings, some of which still add to the beauty and grace of present-day Toronto.

Every section of this well-researched book makes solid contributions to our knowledge of Toronto's history, but the most fascinating chapters remain those in which Mr. Armstrong pummels William Lyon Mackenzie. That doughty old Scot, were he alive today, would no doubt have counter-attacked with force and venom, although he would find our present libel laws a galling hindrance. The impartial historian must affirm, however, that although Mr. Armstrong has sometimes hit hard he has been eminently fair.

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THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

Summers on the Lake

I greatly enjoyed "Paddle Wheels on the Prairies" [*The Beaver*, December 1989/January 1990].

I remember the *Bradbury* and *Keenora* when they were operating out of Selkirk. I attended the Devonshire Collegiate Institute there from 1930 to 1932.

In those Depression days it was hard for a youth to earn money in the summer. The lake boats made it possible to earn a bit of pocket money, at least. We would meet the inter-urban street car (Winnipeg Electric) from Winnipeg and offer our services as porters to people about to embark on the *Keenora*. The street car stop was a good long block from the docks.

We used also to make some money as stevedores when boats came in. Their main article of freight was fish, packed in ice. Most of it was whitefish, but there was some pickerel and, of course, goldeye.

As I recall, there was at least one other wooden ship like the *Keenora* but I do not remember its name. We boys always admired the *Bradbury*; it was so trim and sleek and made of steel, not wood. I believe it was made in Scotland and sailed to Canada. I don't know how they got it to Lake Winnipeg. It would be interesting to know.

Wendell Hewitt-White,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Queenston

I am writing about the article "The Haunting of Mackenzie House" which appeared in your December 1989/January 1990 issue.

In the sidebar to the story, you omitted the information that Mackenzie printed/published the *Colonial Advocate* in Queenston, in May, 1824.

Yes, he did move, impulsively from Queenston to York, in November of that same year, leaving his home which he had built and occupied in 1823.

Beginning next May 24th weekend, the "restored" Mackenzie House in Queenston will be open to view with an interpretive pictorial display on the history of Queenston, Willian Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion.

Mackenzie chose Queenston because it was one of the most active communities in Upper Canada.

George Seibel,
Niagara Falls, Ontario.

The editor of "The Beaver" welcomes contributions to The Packet. Comments on articles, observations on historic events and fresh information from unpublished sources are particularly encouraged. Letters may be edited for length.

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Read these and other fascinating articles and reviews in the June/July issue of **The Beaver.**

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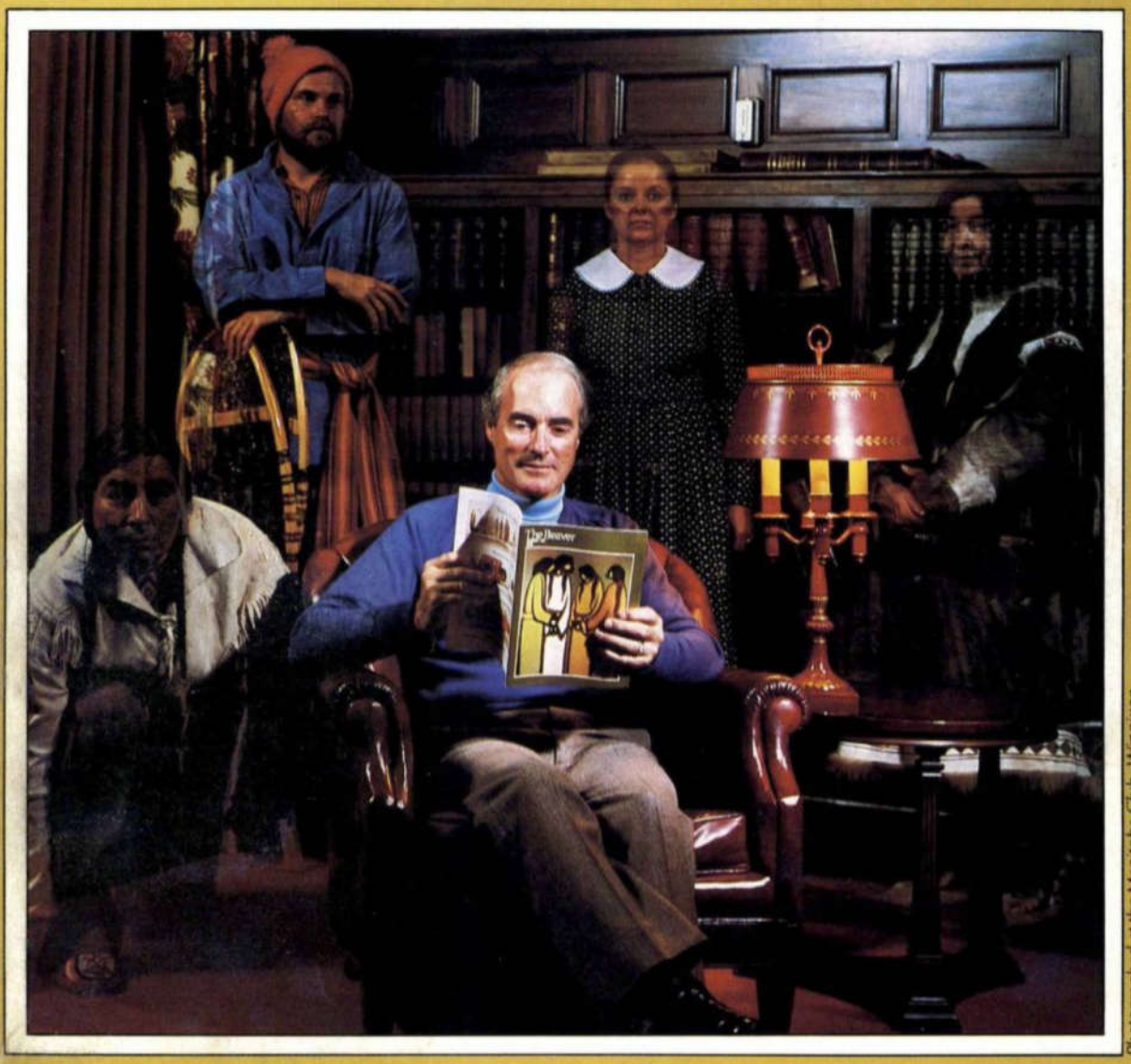

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